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Game Chickens

TAN BARK

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Game chickens, how to breed them.



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GAME CHICKENS

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How To Breed Them

BY

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Asheville, N.C.

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By

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Balcony

Preface

In offering this work to the public the publisher does so with justifiable pride in the knowledge of the fact that it is the greatest treatise ever compiled on the subject of breeding game fowl for battle.

Never has a more wholesomely interesting, instructive and concise piece of work on the various correlated subjects been put in print, and the only regrets that the publisher has to offer is, that the author of so splendid a work will persist in "hiding his light under a bushel."

To all those who love and admire that most gallant, courageous and noble of all the feathered kingdom, this book is respectfully dedicated.

J. H. WENDLER,
Publisher.

Go to School

THERE was an article in a game fowl journal recently from a young fellow who felt pretty well discouraged at the treatment he had received during the first few years of his experience with game chickens. Doubtless hundreds of would-be game chicken men drop out every year because of positive bad treatment or lack of assistance from elder and more experienced men. The beginners themselves are largely responsible for this condition.

Instead of acting with the caution and judgment they would employ in undertaking any other line of endeavor of which they were ignorant—they are unwilling to “go to school” and rush in where angels fear to tread and try to fly before they can walk. Breeders can spot a beginner from his letters—and the unscrupulous know the beginner won’t know a game cock from a hack saw—and send him the worst they have. Even the honest breeder knows it would be a shame to place his best fowl in the hands of a novice—as they are certain to be abused and discarded in a few months in favor of some strain of “world beaters,” which will in turn “get the gate,” and that it will be some seasons before the young enthusiast will know good chickens from bad.

The hardest thing is to start right. That is where the average breeder wastes the first five or ten years of his career. This because he will not “go to school.” He is so anxious to start his meteoric climb to the position of “acknowledged champion of the world” that he wants to start to breed game fowl before he could with certainty tell a game chicken from a leghorn. The same young man who would willingly bind himself as an apprentice for three years provided he desired to learn how to lay bricks—will send for his first trio of fowl within an hour after seeing his first copy of a game fowl journal. He would not try to build a brick chimney until he had watched an expert mason construct scores of them, yet he will spend many weeks’ savings purchasing the ancestors of his future world beaters before he has seen a first-class main of cocks in action. He will send all his wealth to a breeder he never saw, for a family of fowls he never saw in the pit. He will purchase fowl of whose style of fighting he knows nothing, before he knows the style of fighter he admires, or which can win. This is his business, not ours, but the man who starts off haphazard will keep on hap-hazard. Four out of five will get discouraged and quit before he gets properly started. It takes twenty times the amount of brains to breed high-class game chickens than it does to make brick walls, so be content to be an apprentice for a season or two. “Go to School.”

How is this to be done? Read all you can. Get all the books published on game fowl, and study them. Some are better than others, but you can learn a little something from each one. They are all the products of men who have gone through the mill, and learned something, from their experiences, observations and opportunities, and are valuable according to the respective intelligences of their writers. Read the game fowl publications. You

will absorb much chaff along with the wheat, but eventually you will learn which writers demand respect. Listen to all the talk of old chicken men, and believe the tenth of what they tell you. But get your real education by attending all the mains you possibly can. See all the cross-road hacks that take place in your neighborhood, and travel as far and wide as circumstances permit. If there is a well patronized pit in your neighborhood, education is made easy. You can learn as much by seeing other peoples' cocks fight as you can your own—and it is a lot cheaper to see cocks belonging to other men battered around and carried out by the tail than it is to see your own pets so treated. If you do not live near a "fast pit" where masters of the game meet to fight in mains for from one thousand to five thousand a side, do not consider your preliminary education complete until you have taken in half a dozen such events. Where the fighting is purely among local men and local cocks for small amounts, you are likely to miss much. Do not understand me to belittle the cross roads cock fights or the men who confine themselves to hack fighting for small amounts of money. Frequently you will see cocks at such affairs that could win anywhere, and some of the best breeders are poor men who confine themselves to local fighting. But on the average, by far the best cocks are used by men who fight for the most money. You will see some dubs at times in the most important affairs—but nine times out of ten—the cocks shown in a big money affair can lick the show of a small-time artist. The champion team of a class B ball team will appear as smooth an organization in competition with teams of its class as will the New York Giants—but in competition the latter will win 24 games out of 25. In horse racing or boxing, each season scores of local unbeatables, go confidently to the big rings and tracks, only to have it demonstrated that they have stepped out of their classes. A consistent breeder of excellent cocks cannot long remain in obscurity—and cannot long remain a local hack fighter. The men who fight for large purses scour the country for reliable, high-class cocks—and an excellent breeder will have his entire output engaged by a man who wants to back them—or else a local champion of outstanding ability will soon acquire such a large backing that he himself will be battling in the largest pits against the top notchers. Although the rule has its exceptions—if you want to observe the best cocks, go to the famous pits, and look at the birds put down by cock fighters who wager large sums on the outcome of their mains. These professionals take no chances, they are out to win, and leave no stone unturned to get the best cocks obtainable. A first-class strain of chickens cannot long remain in the best circuit.

You will learn things at the pit side that you would not learn from game fowl literature in a million years. The first thing that will strike you is the noticeable absence, in fast company, of certain strains of fowl upon which much printers ink is lavished. I have seen as many high-class mains as most men of my age, and I have visited the yards and farms of the men who produce the cocks that fight in these mains, yet I have never seen cocks of some of the strains most liberally press agented. By reading advertisements, free and otherwise, you will get distorted ideas of the rela-

tive merits of various kinds of game fowl. Somebody must get these world beaters, but they don't find their way up to the grand circuit. The publicity a strain gets depends more upon the vigor and perseverance of its press agent than upon its actual merit. This is particularly true of the north. There are at least two hundred mains a year fought in the Middle Atlantic and New England states, for sums of one to ten thousand dollars a side, which are never mentioned in print. There are two pits in which more than a thousand cocks are fought annually, the location of which has never appeared in print. In the hacks you will see everything tried out, at least once, but the men who produce cocks for the big shows are few.

I make no claim of knowing very much, but I have learned a little in twenty years, and may make the rocky road a little shorter for some other fellow. As I desire neither publicity nor controversy, and intend to deal entirely in generalities, mentioning no names of living breeders or existing strains, I shall have to sign myself merely—

Ed. H. Bell

TAN BARK.

Phila. Penna

The Selection of a Strain

AFTER the beginner has witnessed four or five hundred cock fights and has seen a couple of dozen good mains, he will know more about fighting chickens than he would learn in ten years buying and trying this or that, and confining himself to fighting his own product among other amateurs and he will have a pretty definite idea as to the kind of chickens he wants himself. He will know what breeders consistently produce high class cocks that can win a majority in fast company, he will have formed a preference for a certain family of chickens and I will have decided views of the style of fighting cock he believes will win the most fights in the heels and rules he intends to use, or is forced to use in the locality where he lives. There are certain things he must consider. Before he definitely decides on the strain he desires to perpetuate—he must be cautioned of certain dangers. He should be certain of the pedigree of the strain. Is it founded on rock—or is it a mere temporary structure? Any man whose recollection goes back a dozen years can recall as many so-called strains of chickens which for three or four seasons have swept all before them—only to fall from fame as rapidly as they rose. These strains sprung up in different parts of the country. They are usually a lucky and unpremeditated cross between some very good game hens and a sensational fighting cross bred cock. They surprise everyone by sweeping all before them and win a dozen or more mains in two or three seasons. Then when they have reached the height of their fame they are licked a couple of times, and usually show a few runners, and they are never heard of again. These so-called strains are not strains—but mere nicks. As long as the parent fowl are bred together—they produce winners and cocks that are apparently game. But will not “breed on” or perpetuate themselves. If inbred, they produce runners, and if bred back to either side, or crossed, the lucky charm is lost, and the progeny won’t fight like the original “nick.” So before you settle on a strain, be sure it has been doing business at the same old stand for at least ten years, during that time producing cocks that look alike, fight alike and which always stay. Be sure it can trace its pedigree back only to reliable strains of game chickens—and that it does not owe its present qualities in any part to a sensational but short bred cock. If any bad blood is there—it is bound to show increasingly as time goes on.

I do not mean that it is necessary to breed these so-called “perpetuated” strains, said to have been bred pure, from a pair of chickens imported fifty or eighty years ago. A big majority of these strains bearing an honored name of many, many years ago are fakes, pure and simple. They have been crossed time and again, and the “perpetuator” is not honest enough to admit it. If these fowl, bred from one trio, for fifty years did exist, they would be fit only for museums, not for the pit. And yet you will read long wrangles about whether or not a cross was put in a strain in 1858, from men who will sell “shake cocks” said to be pure of that strain. The laws of nature won’t suspend in favor of any individual—and I would ten times

rather own chickens of an established, uniform strain that is winning today whose owner is honest enough to admit he has made a cross on a good strain, when it became necessary, than possess the product of a nature faker.

I will later discuss in more detail the style of fighting I like to see a cock employ—but the man about to purchase fowl should consider certain essentials. A strain of cocks may for a time win a lot of battles and yet lack true quality in all departments. They may be such dangerous cocks in the go off, and such terrible fighters in the air that they will win quickly against ordinary cocks. But watch carefully how they act when it comes to a fight on the ground. That is when ingrained quality begins to count. Unless when tired and distressed they prove persistent and consistent leg fighters, and kick just as fast and just as often as their feet touch ground—I would not own them, for they will be licked the first time they meet real first-class cocks. Lots of terrible starters, after the froth is off, wrestle and chew, and fiddle and fool around, and only come up with their legs at considerable intervals. Don't get them. Then lots of good leg fighting cocks do not have the bloody heel. The bloody heel is the one greatest essential, and it indicates more than any other one thing the class of breeding that is back of your birds. That is what the great breeders of the past sought particularly to breed into their birds. If a cock kicks as hard and often as a hay tedder, yet if he hits with the bottoms of his feet, or strikes over and hits with his upper leg, he is "dry heeled" and will never produce great chickens.

It should not be necessary to say anything about gameness. You can't have chickens too game, and no strain of chickens ever stayed near the top in short heel fighting that were not very game. Under no circumstances start out with a family of chickens that you do not know to be deep game.

Having decided what you want—the big thing is to get it—and that is sometimes a hard thing to do. There are advertisers who are as careful and skillful breeders as live on earth. If the fowl you want are for sale—your task is easy. If there ever is a time to, loosen up—this is it. Try to get—and pay for the best. No breeder is going to let any favorites go at ordinary prices. If you intend to establish a great family of chickens—you will have an uphill time by starting with "run of the flock" chickens. A man may have 50 cocks that he is glad to sell at fifteen dollars apiece—and four or five cocks that he don't want to sell at all. Make him an offer for one of those he don't want to sell—and make it so high that he can't refuse. A cock costing \$15 is apt to be worth \$15. A cock costing \$100 is apt to be worth \$500. Price don't make a chicken any better—but it's foolish to expect the best at ordinary prices.

Start with another man's high water mark chicken—and you save yourself several years work and effort in trying to improve and breed up his second best. Valuable hens are harder to get than good cocks. Every cockfighter at the end of a season has more first-class cocks than he needs for brood purposes—which he will not need to fight again. He does not want

to sell a proven getter—but is glad to dispose of excellent cocks that have won in the pit. His brood may be the survivors and the choicest of ten or twenty times their number. He has already culled his females as far as he can go. About the best you can hope to do is to get an untried pullet or young hen closely related to a man's best yard. Look them over carefully and pay the price for the best two he will let go. Don't get more than two. That is plenty to start with. You can raise 20 or 30 stags from the two—and that is all you can handle until you have more experience. I will discuss the judging of hens from conformation and breeding later.

Before I close there are just two more words of caution. The average beginner for some unexplainable reason wants large fowl. The best fighting cocks and the best brood fowl are medium or small. Ounce for ounce, there is more power, activity, vitality, speed and action in a small cock than there is in a large one. These are the qualities you want to perpetuate. In mains bottomweights fight from 4 pounds to 4-12 and topweights from 5-10 to 6-04. Large cocks are hard to match and very large ones cannot be used in mains. Size is the easiest thing to get. What you want is fowl that will produce a lot of medium weights, and a few large and a few small ones. I would never want to breed from a cock fighting over 5-08, and I would prefer one from 4-12 to 5-4. I would rather breed from a 4-06 than a six pounder. Hens that weigh from 3-6 to 3-12 are the best.

I would prefer to buy from a man who fights his cocks. A man with sporting blood and confidence in his fowl cannot keep from fighting them. A man who never sees his fowl fight cannot be expected to improve them much --and there is something wrong with a breeder who is never seen at a pit. There are men who for some reason never fight their birds and yet have excellent ones. They sell their fowl to active cockers and when possible see them fight. If you buy from a man who don't fight cocks at least get them from a man whose cocks are good enough to be fought by the best cockers in the best mains. A man who has never followed the cock fighting game cannot breed great fighters. "Amateur Chickens" are not likely to get you anywhere.

Conformation

THE EXTERNAL make up of a game bird is not as important as the blood, brains and spirit inside of him, nor are all good game fowl built just alike. We not infrequently see great winners that offend all the rules and look as though they had been put together in the dark. But there are certain established principles of construction that should guide a breeder. These poorly built cocks that do win, succeed in spite of their faulty construction, not because of it. Judging from the pictures of specimens we see in the magazines—some breeders have small ideas of how a cock should be built and balanced. With few exceptions all the great strains of game fowl have been built much alike—and according to a recognized standard. I have talked with a great many of this country's most careful and successful breeders, and all are agreed on the essentials—and all select brood fowl with an extremely critical eye. Conformation alone will never make winners, but we should give a cock with the proper stuff inside all the help that a well made, well proportioned and well balanced body can give him. His body is the machinery with which he does battle, and it should be as effective and as economical of power as possible.

I like a cock with a small, short head—thick in proportion to its length, and particularly thick at the base of the skull. The beak should be short and strong. A large head is a sign of course breeding. All the great strains of the past, from which our best present-day chickens descend, were carefully bred and had small fine heads. A big head is of no possible advantage and is a larger target for an opponent. I never saw a well bred or a first class cock with a big course head. The eyes should be large and prominent, enabling a cock to see in back of him as well as in front. A small sunken eye is an indication of lack of vitality. The neck should be moderately long, very strong and gracefully curved. The body should be very broad at the shoulders, and the back should be broad and flat over the thighs, and perfectly straight tapering to the tail. A long back is undesirable and I do not favor an extremely short back. The back should be short, but not too short. I never saw an extremely short backed cock that was well balanced—or that seemed to have great freedom of motion. Any good point can be carried to such an extreme that it becomes a fault. I had a friend who always believed a back could not be too short—and bred his fowl for years and years with the idea of producing the shortest backs he could get. He got what he was after—but he so constructed the internal organs of his fowls that his 4½ pound hens laid eggs the size of bantams—and the chicks were very delicate. Some excellent breeders have preferred a long back and I have seen many remarkable fighting cocks that had long backs. My own preference is for a moderately short back.

A cock's breast should be broad and flat, and the breast bone gracefully curved, and should be well filled in with muscle on both sides, and free from curve or indentation. There should be no hollows between the keel and

the thighs. A protruding breast bone, or a deep keel is a great fault and must be strictly avoided. It throws a cock out of balance, and cuts off his reach. In hand the body should give the impression of roundness and compactness, as though it would roll as easily in one direction as another. In the rear he should be tight and well cut up toward the tail. The flesh should feel firm and corky—neither soft nor hard and lumpy. The wings should be kept long, broad and very strong at the wing butt. I like to see the wings meet under the tail. A cock with such wings has great powers of flight, and gets great help from them in keeping going—while a short winged cock has to depend entirely on his legs. A long winged while growing up, and on the walk, will learn to depend on his wings, will roost high and get a lot of exercise that a short winged bird will never attempt. I like to see a cock that from a flat footed start will spring to a roost or a roof eight feet from the ground. My own birds usually roost from 30 to 60 feet up in a tree and it is a beautiful sight to see them come down in the morning. They will light in a field 50 or 60 yards from the tree as lightly as robins. For the same reason the fan of the tails should be long and full feathered. Such a cock can loose a few feathers on walk and still have enough left to balance with. I like to see broad, long feathers all over a cock. Short feathers are nearly always brittle and dry, while long feathered cocks usually have strong, tough quills and well nourished feathers that will not easily break or fray. The original game cock of England and Ireland was a long, fully feathered bird and when you see a short feathered fighting chicken you may know either that he carries outside blood or is the product of misguided breeding.

The thighs of a cock are the one thing that can't be too extreme. The longer and more fully muscled they are the better. They cannot be too long or too strong. They are the engine in the fighting machine—from which the cock gets all his power of propulsion, leverage and wallop. It is the only place a cock can get reach—all the reach possible, without hurting. Get your reach in the thigh—not in the neck or shanks. A cock's thighs correspond to a boxer's shoulders and upper arm, and no fighter ever got far that didn't have shoulders.

The shank should be short, well boned but not too heavily boned. A long shank gives a cock no added power—it merely gives him height and reach and obtain these qualities at too great an expense of accuracy and endurance. A long shanked cock is seldom an accurate marksman. He usually hits the other cock with his leg some little distance above his spur stub. I do not recall ever having cutting cock in short heels that did not have a long thigh and a short shank. Long shanked are more awkward and cannot stay as strong on their pins as short shanked ones.

All the great strains both north and south have been medium stationed fowl—with long thighs and short shanks. When you find a man advocating a lot of station and reach, you can bet he is not a practical fighting man. A reachy cock may look more imposing to the amateur and station might be valuable if your cocks are going to stand and claw each other—

but fortunately good cocks don't fight that way, and a medium stationed, short shanked cock is so constructed that he will kick in the slats of a leggy cock, before it comes down to killing.

The spurs should be set on as low as possible, and the toes should be short and strong. A cock should not stand flat footed on the ball of his foot—but well up on his front toes.

Now a cock may have everything I have described and yet be a poor specimen. The most important thing of all is that he be well proportioned and well balanced, with the ability to judge that comes only with experience—and a natural “eye” for a game cock.

I like to see a cock that stands with his head up—the thighs should be set on far front—and he should give the impression of having his weight fall up in front of his shoulders. His pins should be so set on as to give him a rather erect carriage—not tilted down in front so that his back is level. When he stands still he should stand so that there is a little bend at the hock, and his head should be held so that his eyes are in a direct line above his feet. When he walks he should step out high and clean, with a snap to every step—with his feet striking out straight in front of him. I do not like a cock that walks or runs with a swinging gate like a pacing horse, or one that rolls from side to side as he moves—getting his swing from his upper thigh rather than his knee. A cock that has a lot of knee action will have a snappy stroke and will be a cutter—and sure of his pins. A cock with a swinging gate will hit a long, swinging awkward blow—that a shifty, snappy cock will keep inside of. I like a cock that takes a lot, and is always on the move, scratching for the hens, never still. In hand I like a cock that is “tight fisted”—holds his feet up close to his body and is continually working his legs, moving and talking. In hand he should feel like a bundle of steel springs and whip cord.

The hen should be built on the same lines. For brood purposes I like a hen of good medium bone, full feathered and fan tail, and she must be bright, active and full of pep. These busy hens that are up early and late foraging far and wide, nosing into everything are the kind that get active smart stags. Her balance is more important than that of the cock, and she must have power, vitality and constitution. You cannot raise good birds from a dull, inactive, soft fleshed, or soft feathered hen, although you can sometimes raise good stags from a perfect hen and a physically inferior cock. I like a neat, fine, intelligent head on a hen, with a rather small comb. A big, flop combed hen is coarsely bred.

A hen's pugnacity is no indication of her quality. Some good hens quarrel, others don't. It indicates nothing. If they do fight they should be shifty, active and quick.

Before picking the fowl you are to breed from, study them for hours, both as they move on the walk and in hand.

Gameness

THERE is no question in game chickenology on which men disagree more than in fixing the exact point which distinguishes game cocks from dunghills. Different standards exist in different parts of the country. A cock that would be considered game in some states would be called a dunghill in others. It depends on the kind of chickens customarily used in a given locality. It is no uncommon thing to hear very broad statements to the effect that "any cock may win" under such and such conditions, or that any strain will produce a certain percentage of runners, and those statements will be perfectly honest, and based on the speaker's personal experience, but on inquiry you will find that he comes from some section of the country where there are no old-time breeders, or old-line breeders, or old established strains. Where cocking is a new game taken up by the sportively inclined within the past quarter century, in a locality where no old school cocker has settled, with the cocks and traditions of the old sod, you will find them all fighting commercial chickens which they purchase here and there, through the publicity given such chickens, and naturally these men draw their conclusions from such cocks as they have seen. Getting out into the world and seeing the product of other localities is a good education. We all recall the first southern tournaments held twelve or so years ago—in which practically half of the losing cocks took it on the run. These cocks were the products of local champions who considered they had a good chance against the world—with what they considered game cocks. Compare this with that recent Orlando Tournament where two cocks out of 260 quit. Less than one per cent. The tournaments have been great educators, and a lot of people have learned that real game cocks exist—and have obtained them.

My views on gameness are based not only on my personal experience, but on an exchange of views with a great many of the most careful and successful breeders and cockfighters.

I do not think any normal, healthy, well walked and properly treated cock of pure blood will quit or loaf in battle—or will refuse to show after cooling off on the day following battle. In this part of the country the standard test is that a cock must take his death from a fresh cock the day after receiving a severe and prolonged cutting. A cock that will merely show, but not stand a battering the second day may fairly be considered game—but I would not breed from such a bird. I will give my reasons for this later.

I am very lenient with a bird that is not in proper shape and would not fight such a bird and would excuse a lot if I saw such a bird fought. Gameness is not only a question of purity of blood because that blood must be backed up by vitality, sexual vigor and health and normal mentality.

Before subjecting a cock to a test, consider the following things. Is he normal—is he healthy—is he mature—has he been properly walked—has he been abused?

physically and sexually. The sexual organs have a very great and a very that a cock is endowed with average chicken mentality and is normal physically and sexually. The sexual organs have a very great and a very direct bearing on courage. A capon will not fight at all and a cock that is subnormal sexually has not the courage of a sexually vigorous brother. Although I have had but two experiences with subnormal cocks, they are perhaps worth relating because in the light of these experiences, if I should now see a cock of unquestioned blood, in apparent health act badly I would immediately cut him open to see if his sexual apparatus was normal. The first cock would have fooled anybody and did fool several experienced men. He was the best looking of 15 brothers and for that reason was bred from as a stag. He was perfectly formed, vigorous and full of fight. In his first battle he ran away after receiving a few wallops. He did not yell or throw up his hacks—but ran like a deer. His second battle he won in a hurry. He was fought twice more and both times ran. He never seemed cowed and as soon as he was returned to his coop would crow and show fight. He fed well and would have fooled any trainer. He is the only cock that was subnormal that didn't show it. He got game stags, although I would not care to perpetuate the tendency toward freakishness. The second cock was the best looking of six brothers, a beautifully formed and feathered bird, full of life and vitality. But he would always hack when handled and would never face a cock—although on a farm walk for a year. He was not bred, but got two sons by a hen that stole her nest. One lost a game fight and the other had won 3 battles the last I heard of him. When dissected the first cock was found to have testicles about one-third the normal size—and the second cock had testicles about the size of a pea.

Health is an easy thing for a competent feeder to determine. If a cock is seriously ill, or has been sick so long that his vitality has been undermined, no white man expects him to put up a long hard fight. But his condition is apparent to any experienced man, and is not a reasonable alibi for a bad cock.

The age at which a bird should take his death depends upon his development, his walk and the blood in him. In the North birds have been fought as stags for generations—and this has had the tendency to develop strains which get their courage early. In the South no attention is paid to stag fighting and no effort has ever been made to obtain early development. A bird with Aseel blood may be very game as a cock, but have little courage as a stag. I would not want to fight a stag much under 10 months—but a well bred stag carrying no Oriental blood should take his death at 11 months—or I would be suspicious of him.

A cock should be well walked before he is put through a hard test. It makes no difference whether the walk is a 100 acre farm or a 6x30 pen, just so it is good. If properly handled, fed a sufficient variety of the proper foods and is made to exercise and not allowed to grow fat or loggy, a good pen walk is better than many farm walks—but a cock that is merely penned and not “pen walked” by a competent man, and which is allowed to grow

fat, stale and inactive until his internal organs fail to function properly, has his vitality so lowered by the experience that I would not consider it fair to fight him or to judge his actions.

Now, when a cock has been chased and abused until he is manshy—no matter what his blood, he cannot be relied on to go through a long hard fight for many months. I have seen such cocks apparently tame up in the feeding coop—but sulk when fought. Particularly when they are blinded they will act badly, because they don't know whether it is a cock or their old enemy man attacking them.

For these reasons I do not advocate testing a cock right off his walk. A cock picked up may look and act right—not showing that he has been through a long sickness, or that he is naturally subnormal or that poor management and abuse have undermined his constitution and courage—but when put through real feed by a competent man, the feeder will 99 times out of 100 discover that the cock is not right.

If a cock feeds and walks right—and is shown by a good man—it is too late for alibis or excuses. If he quits he is a dunghill. Winning or losing he must fight with all the power in him to be a game cock to me. He must force the fighting from the time he is dropped in the pit until he is carried out. A cock that sinks down to rest, when able to struggle to his legs is a loafer. A cock that only fights when the other cock forces him is a loafer—and so is the cock that merely kills when he has the power to strike. A loafer is a cock that will eventually sulk, and a sulker is a cock that will eventually quit, if the battle goes long enough. A cock must not only fight, but fight to win to suit me. A dunghill cock will make a bluff at fighting when in reality he fears to stir up his opponent. He will sink down as though exhausted—or if forced to fight will hit short and light. A game cock will put his heart and power in every wallop—and one of the first indications that a cock is getting ready to stop is when he begins to hit softly. Most any old cock will look good when winning, but it takes a game cock to force the fighting after he has been on the losing end for a half hour or so. Be not deceived by the sudden show of aggressiveness evinced by a cock that has been loafing, when his opponent suddenly caves in. A cock knows when he is losing as well as you do—and many a dughill has pulled off an impressive finish after getting an unexpected advantage.

Depth of Gameness

I HAVE previously said that I want a cock game enough to take his death from a fresh cock the day following battle and would consider a kind that would not do so of doubtful gameness. That is the standard in this part of the country—and so long as such fowl exist, why be satisfied with a kind less game.

A great many men will disagree with this point of view—and I am satisfied to have them do so, as I am not anxious to meet any more deep game cocks than necessary. A number of men have said that they don't care what a cock does the day after battle—just so he stays during a single battle.

The best illustration of my point of view was given some years ago by the late Paul Whitehead. It was this: Two banks on opposite sides of the street may have equally attractive and valuable buildings and both have ample cash in the cages to transact any normal day's business. One has empty vaults, while the other has a million cash in its safes. The service rendered by each may be equally satisfactory for a considerable length of time. Then comes a time of stress, abnormal conditions, with a great demand for cash. The normal supply of cash in the cages is exhausted—and one bank goes under, because it has no reserve in its vaults. The other bank brings out its reserve and weathers the storm.

In any dozen clutch brothers, there is one that is strongest, one that is fastest, one that is the best cutter and one that is the gamest. Also one that is the slowest, one that is the ugliest, one poorest heeler and one least game. There will be an average gameness for the lot, and half of these will be gamer than the average, and half less game than the average. In an inbred uniform strain, the variation will be very small, but nevertheless it will exist.

If your average is just game enough to fight a single battle, and show after cooling off—but not take a pounding—there will be some cocks below the average that won't show at all after cooling—and if enough are fought you will occasionally get a cock that won't finish a single battle. I have never known a strain of cocks, that would hack after cooling, which did not produce a fair percentage of cocks that quit if the battle went long and hard enough. You can't have too much gameness. It's a matter of dollars and cents in the pit.

Every man who fights many cocks is bound, sooner or later, to have to fight under unfavorable conditions, where his cocks will need all the excessive gameness possible. Suppose his walks have not been just as good as expected, or his cocks do not get in good shape in the feed or some of them catch cold or a long trip throws them off. Under these conditions a strain that is on the borderline of gameness, will show some loafers, sulkers or runners, but a strain with plenty of excess gameness will stay and fight in spite of their bad shape. A strain that will produce cocks that will all

take their death after cooling out after battle, has such an excess amount of gameness, that under any reasonable conditions, it will produce no runners. As long as such strains exist, why be satisfied with less? As a purely money making proposition, cocks cannot be too game.

Fighting ability and condition being equal, in short heels, the gamer cocks will win 5 out of 8 battle any time. Last winter I saw a main of perfectly game cocks—cocks that fought hard and honestly every minute they were in the pit—badly licked by excessively game cocks. Every battle was even for several minutes until both cocks were badly weakened and distressed. Then the excessive gameness and courage allowed the gamer cocks to forge to the front. They were a trifle more desperate, scored just a trifle faster, got their kicks off just a fraction of a second sooner and packed a little more heart into every wallop.

An intensely game cock will not allow weariness to make him sleepy; he is not satisfied to let up or ease down. He fights to win and forces the fighting. He will recuperate so quickly and so often that his very spirit and confidence in himself will discourage a winning opponent.

I once saw a ten thousand dollar main, in which a main of full brothers were shown by a man who said his cocks would always fight a game battle, and he didn't care what they did the next day. He won and lost a number of hard fights, lasting twenty minutes or so and his cocks acted just as well as their opponents. In the deciding fight, his cock met a Gray of a strain bred by an old Irishman, now dead, who insisted for 25 years that every cock he bred from should stand at least a two day test, and in that time he never showed a runner and never lost but one main out of forty.

For fifty-two minutes the Gray was down with the Dark Red battering him. The Red had only one injury—a blow which so affected his eye sight that he couldn't see down very well. At least a dozen times the Gray was supposed to be dead, but he always had one more peck. At the end of 52 minutes, although he had not received a blow for more than half an hour, the Dark Red dropped his tail and ran, carrying ten thousand dollars with him. The spirit of the little Gray broke the Red's heart. He knew he was up against a better man than he was.

The two day test is enough for any cock and for any man. Some talk about a four day test and practice it, but I consider this neither fair nor useful. A cock that will take a two day test is game enough for any one for any purpose. One man I gave a stag to, to cut down, and he stood it for four days. A former friend that I gave a cock to cut him down for three days, then cut his legs off with a hatchet and let another cock kill him. He died fighting. Testing is revolting under any circumstances and should be done no more than is essential. A man who could so treat a chicken is not fit to live, let alone own game chickens.

Twenty-four hours after a severe cutting a cock develops such a fever that he is not normal mentally or physically, and I would not abuse him under those conditions. If he continues to show it is enough for me.

Some cocks are so tough and rugged that they will stand several days cutting, but it is not fair and does not indicate that another cock bred the same way will do it. The more nervous, high strung and inbred a cock is, the more violently does his system react to injury. His pain is greater and his fever higher. He becomes a much sicker cock than a coarse bred phlegmatic cock would become from the same injuries and in my opinion a test prolonged after the second day is more apt to deceive than indicate a purity of blood in the cock.

If you become the owner of a strain that you do not know thoroughly, or have made a cross which is uncertain, you might fight fifty of them without getting a fight which thoroughly tested them—and pit fighting is an expensive way to try out an uncertain strain.

My method, not because I enjoy it, but because it is a short cut and enables you to get at the root of the information you seek in a short time, is to take at least four cocks of doubtful blood as near alike in weight as possible, to make a fair match, put them in perfect condition, as you would if you were going to fight them for a thousand dollars. Match two pairs, heel them in short heels, corked so that only one half inch of blade is exposed and let them fight thirty or forty minutes, or until thoroughly weary and distressed. Complete exhaustion is a more thorough test of gameness than mere cutting. Then take off the corks and let one of each pair get killed. If all is satisfactory up to this point take two winners, wash them off, let them drink and rest in darkened coops from six to twelve hours. Then take them out and heel them in short heels and let one of them kill the other. If he dies trying and the winner does not hack when cooled down, you have as game cocks as anybody needs. If any of the four loaf, sulks or quits, do away with their kind.

Be sure that the birds you test contain the doubtful blood on their mother's side. A stag inherits his courage much more from his dam than from his sire. I have known hens so game that their sons would stand this test though sired by a cock who would not fight at all the second day. But a hen cannot produce any gamer sons than she herself is, though bred to a deep game cock. So if you are starting with a new trio of fowl—new on all sides—the test merely shows you that the hens are deep game and the cocks fairly so. You really cannot determine the cocks gameness until you have tested stags out of one of his daughters.

All the breeders who handed down great strains to posterity were great sticklers for gameness. A short bred strain may have temporary success but is bound to be short lived. Inbreeding accentuates the bad blood in a family and a short bred strain cannot be perpetuated.

Deep game chickens are not common but they exist, and you might as well have them as any one else. They give ten times more satisfaction and pleasure to the owner, than is possible to get from near game and a deep game strain can spot a short bred strain fifteen per cent in fighting ability and whip them.

We have much discussion as to cocks hacking and quitting in their moults and many defend such cocks. It is true there are cocks who will hack and

quit in moult will die game a few months later. Some cocks have such delicate constitutions that they are sick cocks when in moult, feverish and low in vitality. Rugged sound constituted cocks, properly treated are little affected and the moult furnishes no alibi for them.

Personally I would not breed from a kind that hacked in moult or which quit in that condition, provided he happened to get in a fight for the following reasons: Either he is so delicate of constitution as to be an undesirable brood cock or else he is so near the borderline between a game cock and a dunghill, or carries so little reserve courage that I do not care to perpetuate his kind.

Style of Fighting

A MAN may have the handsomest, strongest and gamest cocks in the world, yet they will be a liability rather than an asset if they are not first class fighters. Surprisingly few breeders make any particular effort to breed their fowl to fight any particular style—or even stop to think what style of combat is the most effective.

By breeding from great winning cocks, they consider that they do all that is necessary. One year they select a brood cock, a cock that wins with one terrible shuffle—and the next year they breed his pullets to a high flying, sparring cock, that won by topping his opponent—the next year and infighter strikes their fancy, and so on. Their chickens are literally bred from winners for generations, and yet no two will fight alike, and such a system of breeding will produce birds that are not particularly good at any kind of fighting. Few men analyze the style of their great winners; any cock that wins looks good to them. One of the very greatest breeders this country ever had, never bred a good chicken in his life because he was no judge of a fighting cock. He continually bred either from some “Flutter bird” that in his wild wing fighting by chance did land one killing blow, or from some winner of a long game fight, which would have been a very short and easy fight if the cock had carried a “bloody heel.” But the strains that have reached the top, and have influenced American cocking history, have been produced by men who had very decided views of the way a cock should fight and by selection, succeeded in getting their chickens to fight alike and the way they wanted them to.

I do not pretend to know anything about long heel fighting, so I will confine my discussion to the style of fighting that I like in short heels. When just right, I think no cock can whip an infighter.

Such a cock fairly flies from the score, never lets his opponent get set, is on and in him, crowds him to death, knocks him down and kills him, just as a hawk would kill a robin. Until I see one of these “slow movies” of such a cock in action, I will never know how they fight, because my eyes are not quick enough to follow their movements.

They appear to go in head up, using their feet, hand over hand, fairly running into the other cock as they carry him in front of them.

This is probably an optical delusion but whatever the method it is invincible. However I do not try to breed this type, and do not consider cocks bred to fight this way, will win the most battles, out of a hundred, for the following reasons:

In the first place I have never seen a family of chickens, that would produce more than three first class infighters out of ten and those that were not infighters, were rather messy fighting second rate cocks, inclined to want to bill hold, shuffle a lot, not particular leg fighters, nor good marksmen. The infighter is not a particularly brainy type of chicken, he wins by irresistible power, speed and dash. I have a friend who has bred toward this type for 10 years, breeding only from great fighting cocks and their mothers,

daughters and sisters. He has produced some unbeatable cocks, but gets no larger percentage of infighters than he did when he started out, and sixty per cent of his chickens are only ordinary and do not show high class. In the second place a natural born fighter has to be just right to fight in that style. He must come off a good walk, be in perfect shape, up on his toes, and rearing to go. The greatest infighter I ever saw, a terrific cock that broke his opponent's bones and filled him full of holes and stretched him out flat and mangled in less than a minute, was put on a perfect walk and fought three months later, with three ounces too much fat on him. He didn't feel like going off with that killing dash and fought like a dub, mouthing a lot and kicking a little, and with less accuracy. He could not adapt himself to his opponent's style and was licked by a very ordinary rooster.

As I have said before, this type of cock is not very intelligent or adaptable. I have seen cocks of this type knock down an opponent with one rush, but fall just short of killing him and then not be able to cut down a cock and mess around and strike over until the opponent recovered enough to get a bill hold and kill them.

My own favorite strain fights as follows or rather a big majority of them do, and it is the type of fighter I try to produce. He leaves the pitter's hands quickly, but not in a headlong rush across the pit, but cautiously, on the edge, waiting for his opponent to break first, if necessary feigning his opponent into leading. He probably side steps his opponent first couple of flies until he gets the range and then he hits his opponent, just as he lands, or just before he lands, and steps back out of danger and repeats. He hits with a short, quick, snappy, single stroke, not a wide swinging blow, but a lightning like jab and is back out of danger.

I like for him to make the target the upper breast, not the head or neck, he stays close to the ground, where he can quickly move in any direction, he is as clever on his feet as a human boxer, hits his opponent when the latter is helpless, when he is up in the air, he delivers his blow and he drops his legs to stand on. He shoots at the breast, which is large and easily hit target. To hit at the head, he would have to go too high, and top the other cock, and there place himself at a disadvantage. A cock in the air, is helpless before a brainy cock on the ground, waiting for him to come down.

Then too a cock may hang in his opponent's head four or five times before he hits the brain and blows in the head that don't kill seem to do a cock little damage. I have seen the gaffs pulled from a cock's head more than a dozen times and leave him almost as good as new.

A body cutting cock is not so apt to bring home the bacon with one sensational shot, but on the other hand no matter how well conditioned a cock may be, he caves in very quickly when his lungs are punctured full of holes. I have seen one strain of body punching cocks win half a dozen mains, from this country's best short heel feeder. They have always won in just the same way. They work away without delivering any telling shots and after two or three minutes of uneventful sparring without so much as

a bill hold, their opponents begin to totter and fall on their tails, and when they get that way they never come back.

Every time it has been said that the opponents of these cocks were not in condition, that they were so weak that they couldn't stand on their feet for three minutes. True, they couldn't, but it was because their heart and lungs were punched full of holes and not because they were not in shape. Most short heeled fighters are accustomed to seeing sparring, head and neck biting cocks, and they are used to seeing their cocks strong on their pins, and with lots of come back, until they are killed stone dead by an accurate punch, they don't realize that any cock, cut much in the body will quickly weaken and sicken.

It is pretty to see a clever cock catch his opponent on the head with accuracy, time after time, but I really believe that the cock that shoots for the body is the money getter.

To get back to the fight where we left it—I want to see the cock keep up the careful shifty method, making his opponent lead and hitting when he comes down, until his opponent begins to falter and sag. When he sees an opening I want him to sail in and quickly finish the job, fairly sweeping the other before him, raining blows on him at close quarters, never letting his opponent get balanced and set.

When he knocks his opponent down, I prefer a cock that single strokes his opponent's head as fast and hard as he can, picking the head up and clipping it. The best fighting cock that I ever saw, knew that a down opponent was still dangerous and only needed a bill hold to get up on, and he never gave a down cock a chance to break with him. He stood off shooting his head back and forth like a snake, making the down cock bill at him, then he would catch hold of the other cock's head when that cock's neck was fully extended and crack it. Some cocks clip at a down cock's head without a bill hold and catch it two times out of three. This is much safer than walking close to a down cock and taking hold, as I have seen many a down cock go up on such a hold, and break the winning cock's neck.

But all your cocks can't go in and win and the method of a cock that is being held even or is getting licked is just as important or more so than is his style of fighting when he has the battle under his control. In short heels I have no use for a cock that suffles, when he has a chance to land a single stroke wallop, but when crowded by the other cock, or the other cock gets an upper hold on him, I want to see a cock shuffle like sin, until he can get out of close quarters, not sit down on his tail and shuffle, but shuffle high, hard and close.

When a cock gets a sudden crack that puts him at a disadvantage, I want to see him throw caution to the winds and sail in and try to even things up. A badly hurt cock cannot hope to keep away from a sounder and stronger opponent, and a crippled cock cannot out-maneuver an unhurt one. He must even things up quickly and has to take a chance.

I recall offhand having seen the deciding battle in two mains, won by cocks up to the time of receiving critical and crippling cracks, had fought careful shifty fights. Both won by quickly changing tactics and taking their

opponent completely off their guard, but sudden murdering dashes. I recall having seen a cock at a main in Long Island several years ago, that had fought a defensive fight, trying to keep out of harm's way until he got a shot that knocked him down. He summoned all the strength he had, and flew six feet across the pit at his opponent and broke his neck, and fell in a heap unable to rise again.

When the froth is worn off, cocks must necessarily come down to fighting at close quarters on the ground. They haven't the power to get around and fight at long ranges and are too mad to want to do so. That is when the real battle starts and it is then that the best bred cock begins to work into lead. I would not give the hole in a doughnut for a cock that doesn't kick just as soon as his feet touch ground. I want to see him keep his head up, switch like lightning, keeping his head always toward his opponent and strike immediately, beating his opponent to the punch. A cock that feels around for a bill hold and mauls and yanks and wrestles his opponent around before striking or which hesitates or rests between blows, or which ducks in low and gives his opponent the upperhold is a purely bred cock, and is courting a deserved and ignominious death. This is where gameness begins to count. The gamier a cock is, the more fire and speed and vindictiveness he will show as the battle progresses. The gamier he is the faster he will push the battle, the oftener he will kick and the less he will hesitate.

He will switch a trifle faster, rise from a fall a little more quickly, get his wallops off a trifle sooner, put more snap in his punches, beat his opponent to the punch, hit the other cock before the latter is set to hit back and gradually work into the lead.

A cock that stays down when he has the power to get up, or which fails to finish a losing opponent as soon as possible, or a cock that hits light blows, or pulls his blows, hitting short or with the bottom of his feet, is a cock that doesn't like the milling and is getting ready to go, if his opponent lands it to him hot and fast enough.

A game cock will always hit with all his power, no matter how weary and distressed he may be, he will always push the battle, losing or winning, he will get up after punishment that would make a poorly bred cock stay down, he will perform comebacks that will discourage and dishearten a winning but short bred opponent. In short hacks extreme gameness is a most important factor, not because any considerable percentage of battles come down to drag battles, where a bad bred cock will actually sulk and quit, but because few battles are won or lost in the go off. The battle is not usually decided before it comes down to bill and strike fighting between two wounded and distressed cocks, and at this stage of the fight, the gamier cock is always the better fighter, and in a main of eleven or thirteen fights, with approximately equal condition and fighting ability, the side having the gamier cocks will win three battles out of every five.

A short bred cock fights with the fear of death in his heart, he fights savagely and desperately and starts off like a flash of lightning to end an unpleasant job as soon as possible, and is apt to get his game opponent at a great disadvantage in the go off and he will look good as long as he has

a decided lead, but if he does not succeed in knocking his opponent down and it comes down to a real fight, from then on the game cock is much the better fighter, because he puts his whole heart into every wallop and because of his vindictiveness, he will outspeed and outfight the short bred cock, whose blows will be fewer and weaker as his heart melts within him.

A good fighting cock is by no means licked when he is knocked down by an unhurt opponent in short heels. I have often seen a battle won by a cock stretched out in the pit. If your cock is game and he has the kicking instinct bred into him he is dangerous as long as he has a spark of life. A good time to judge the depth of good breeding in a cock, is when he is down and half killed.

A good cock will attempt to strike with his legs every time he is touched and he will grab for a bill hold and try to break with his opponent.

If a cock bills when down he hasn't a chance, but a kicking cock is always worth a bet. Only recently I saw a broken legged cock, rattled until blue in the face, uncork a wallop from a sitting position, that sounded like hitting the side of a barn with a fence rail, which lifted his opponent clear off the ground and dropped him dead against the opposite side of the pit.

I have discussed herewith only the tactics of a cock in a pit but all the tactics in the world won't help a cock if he doesn't carry a bloody heel. The old English breeders prided themselves upon the bloody heels of their cocks and paid more attention to its development than to anything else, and it is the best test of the kind of breeding back of a cock. In long heels or in rules which permit much padding under the gaff a cock may be given artificial assistance and the point of the heel may be put where he can use it, but if you use short heels, heeled flat to the leg, the bloody heel must be bred into your cock. A bloody heel is one which so strikes, that the point of his natural spur is pointing practically at right angles to the target at the moment of contact and which carries the blow through, so that his natural spur stub, if his heels are sawed off, strikes the point aimed at.

Cocks that are not bloody heeled may strike beyond their target and if no gaff is worn hit with their legs above the spur stub, in which case long heels and high points, may enable them to cut, or they may hit short and land with the bottom of their feet, in which case no kind of heels can help them. It takes very little accurate cutting to kill any chicken, and it is a revelation to see how quickly and with how little apparent effort the breeders of chickens who have spent years in developing the cutting ability of their strain can win. I used to know an old Englishman whose cocks could handle their legs with the accuracy with which a boxer can use his fists, unless they were ripped early, his cocks nearly always cut their opponents down with five or six well placed blows. It was impossible to pick up one of his cocks with a "catching cock" without getting struck. They could shoot out their legs more quickly than you could shoot out your hand.

In short heels a cock should employ a short, quick snappy stroke, not a wide swinging blow. It takes a considerable fraction of a second longer to get across a swinging blow than a short straight jot. A cock must fly higher to enable him to get his swing around, he loses accuracy, not only by his own

exertion but by giving his opponent a fraction of a second longer to move and a quick jabbing cock will beat his opponent to the punch every time. It is necessary for a cock to hit wide and with considerable spread in order to point a long gaff, but the less spread the better for short heels.

Last but not least, a cock that gets his opponent down must not show him mercy for the fraction of a second. He must make hay while the sun shines and lambast his opponent with all he has while the going is good. A cock in good condition, in short heels, usually needs but a few seconds' rest to become dangerous and I have seen scores of cocks that ended up on down opponents lose because they failed to make the most of their advantage. A good finisher is essential in short heels. He must score on his down opponent as rapidly as at first of the fight and he must kick and kick, and not let go until his opponent is carried out. When a cock loafes against a down opponent it is a sure sign that he is poorly bred.:

Inbreeding and Outcrossing

WHEN a breeder starts out he must determine the course he is going to pursue. If he intends to become a chicken huckster I have no advice for him, but if his ambition is to fight cocks and bet his own money on them, he must watch his step. I have therefore advised picking out the one best strain on the horizon to start with and sticking to it.

It is more than most of us can do to breed one strain good enough to stay near the top of the ladder, let alone two, five, ten or even twenty kinds. Good breeding is only a matter of intelligent selection of brood fowl and the man with one strain has the great advantage. Suppose he wants to fight eighty cocks a year. He raises and walks enough for that purpose—all from one family. He sees eighty cocks all bred, alike, fight alike, and he has eighty specimens from which to select a brood cock or two. His selection is the best cock of the eighty and in that number there are bound to be a few cocks of exceptional merit, far above the average of the strain, and by breeding them he goes up hill with the next generation. To have eighty cocks to fight he probably raises one hundred and twenty pullets from which to select a half dozen as future brood stock and it's not necessary to say that he will have half a dozen marvelous females in that number.

Now suppose he raises four strains instead of one and fights twenty of each. He must run at least two yards of each family and must select his two brood cocks from his winners among the twenty that fight. He has very little choice. To keep each family going he must have as many yards of each kind of chickens as he would have to keep one single strain, otherwise he will much sooner have to resort to crossing or injurious inbreeding.

No man can tell me of one single advantage to be gained by breeding more than one strain of chickens.

History speaks for itself. All the great strains of the past and present have been produced by men who devoted their entire time and talents in the attempt to perfect one or two families of chickens. Yet amateurs who have never won a main of cocks in their lives will devote their limited ability to ten or fifteen distinct strains.

Having procured your one family the question is how to keep them as good as they are. If the strain of your choice is widely distributed and is bred in its purity by other careful and able breeders, your problem is easy. Every four or five years you can get a fresh cock and keep going. Unfortunately most good families are rather closely held and those that are not are apt to fall into hands of men who will not be as careful as you would like and the procuring of fresh blood will become exceedingly difficult, and you will find yourself confronted with the necessity of either inbreeding or outcrossing and you will have to decide which course to pursue.

I find among men who have never tried it an amusing ignorance of the real results of inbreeding. Men stand in horror of the idea of incest even of the lower animals and have no real idea of how it affects chickens.

Strains differ in this respect and strangely the purer and more un-

mixed the blood of a family of chickens the better it will stand inbreeding. Much crossed coarsely bred chickens deteriorate more rapidly under inbreeding than pure strains.

But given pure blood and birds with no constitutional or mental defects any man can inbreed practically indefinitely if he uses proper judgment and can raise his fowl under suitable conditions. An inbreeder must be scrupulously careful ever to breed from a bird with the slightest vice or defect. A fault once introduced into an inbred strain can never be eliminated and will become accentuated with each generation. I once spoiled a good family of chickens by introducing into its blood lines the get of a deep keeled poorly balanced hen. Although I bred only from her perfect descendants each generation produced a large percentage of natchet breasted tip-tilted chickens. A friend once bred from a roach baked cock that was a great fighter and ruined an excellent family of fowl.

Also an inbreeder must breed only from his most vigorous and husky specimens. If his chickens once slip in this respect and the blood of a weakling is carried on, all the king's horses and all the king's men will never put the strain together again. So unless you can breed on free range and give your birds every advantage producing constitutional soundness and vitality I do not advise attempting close inbreeding. With so many difficulties confronting the inbreeder, what are the advantages?

In the first place in no other way can you produce birds that will all act alike and fight alike. In no other way will you produce uniformity, in no other way can you produce birds that you know will fight and cut in a certain way before you see them in the pit. Certainly it's a great thing in any form of gambling and it's a great advantage to a feeder to have a lot of cocks that can be treated alike. Great feeders have made their reputation fighting one strain of chickens.

Secondly—in no other way can fowl be kept to a standard and improved. It is only by perpetuating a preponderance of the blood of great individuals of chickens above the average of the strain, that improvements in that average can be obtained—that is by breeding a great individual cock to fowl already carrying his blood such as his mother, aunts, daughters, nieces or grand-daughters.

Thirdly—the disadvantage of crossing so outweighs those of inbreeding that inbreeding is by far the easiest way. I am here to testify that any cross is a gamble, and I will speak of the troubles that beset a crosser later on. You occasionally hear of strains that have been ruined by too much inbreeding and that have passed from view for this reason, but for every one such instance there are ten cases that were spoiled by crossing.

I have therefore advised an inexperienced breeder to start with one trio and I stick to that. Breed the hens separately and after fighting their get for two or three seasons and learning all you can of their peculiarities and characteristics, you are satisfied that you have good chickens—then it will be plenty of time to branch out.

If at that time it is possible to procure another cock and hen of exactly the same blood as your own, do so, and then establish as many

different blood lines of similarly bred fowl as possible. The secret of being able to inbreed is in establishing as many subfamilies in your strain as possible, so that every three or four years you can cross one family on another. If you can't get more fowl like your original trio, don't be discouraged, you can breed without a cross for 15 or 20 years anyway.

Breed as few generations as possible. Instead of mating new matings each year, keep a successful mating together for three, four or five years. You can then in 20 years do less inbreeding than you would do in five or six years if you made new matings each year. Breed your original trio together, the hens separately of course. The next year breed each hen separately to a son of each hen. You now have four families of chickens all bred a little differently. Keep up the system, keeping each successful mating together two or three seasons and do not until necessary start crossing one family on another. It should be seven or eight years before you will want to cross the family carrying three quarters of the blood of the other hen. And that makes this mating between young fowl that you can keep together three or four years and at the end of that time mate young fowl from that mating to a four or five year old bird carrying three-quarters of the blood of the original cock. If you have been able during any of this time to obtain fresh blood of the original strain, it is easy to see how with five or six families within the strain established, a man can keep going for half a lifetime without crossing. It is a big help if you have a friend who lives at a distance in a different soil, a man whom you know to be more careful, skillful and trustworthy than yourself, to get him to breed a yard of your fowl for you. It is a fact that your own fowl so bred for a few years may be brought home and will have almost the same invigorating effect on your flock as an outside cross, with none of the disadvantages of the latter.

Game fowl of sound constitution and properly cared for may be bred together until four or five years of age and if bred on yearling or two year old hens may be used as a brood cock until seven or eight years old.

A good hen if bred to stags is as valuable when eight or nine years old as she was as a pullet. Breed age to youth and after you are thoroughly established and have plenty of sub-families within your own strain it will not be necessary to breed old fowl to produce your pit fowl, but it is always wise to keep a few vigorous old birds that you can go back to, to produce breeders. A bird you bred eight or nine years ago, may carry such different proportions of the blood of your original fowl from the birds that you bred last year as to be practically a cross for you.

Line breeding is but one specimen of inbreeding and it is the method by which you take advantage of the outstanding qualities of your most exceptional birds and make his or her great virtue a permanent thing in your flock. When you breed an exceptional cock, a cock that proves in the pit that he is the high water mark of your efforts, breed him to his mother and also to an aunt and the next year breed him to his daughters out of an aunt. Breed him also to a niece or cousin and back on his daughters. You thus have a family of fowl carrying a large preponderance of the blood of your greatest fowl with his qualities so firmly fixed in them that they will re-

produce almost exact counterparts of the cock you desire to duplicate. I do not think it possible to produce practical pit fowl by line breeding more than father and daughter, thus getting three-fourths of his blood. If you breed him on his granddaughters so bred you will have seven-eighths of his blood but the chickens will be physically inferior and not rugged enough to fight. However this seven-eighths blood will be valuable for mating to a distant line.

Lots of breeders condemn inbreeding for results for which something else is responsible. I know one man who tried to raise 150 young game chickens in a third of an acre which didn't have a blade of grass on it. He blamed inbreeding for his spindly chickens. Some years ago I was much discouraged with the results of breeding a strain I had inbred for ten years, as the chickens were all spindly and weedy. It was a very dry year in which we had no rain for three months and the ground was baked and the grass parched. I noticed the chickens of my cross breeding friends were just as poor as mine, so the next year I tried the same mating and got as good fowl as I ever owned. So before deciding that a cross is necessary make sure that inbreeding is the real cause of your troubles.

No perpetual crosses ever stayed near the top of the ladder. Look back over the history of American cocking and you will see that every breeder who has left a name behind him made that name because of the success of his inbred and uniform strain of fowl. Occasionally some man makes a lucky cross of inbred fowl and has two or three seasons of remarkable success, but the cross won't breed on and perpetuate itself and after a season or two of defects, the strain and the breeder go back to oblivion and ditch digging. Within the past 15 years as many strains of "world champions" have flashed across the pages of history and are gone. Permanent success can only go hand in hand with an established uniform line of cocks, generation after generation of which will look alike and fight alike.

Some cockers have success in fighting first crosses, produced by breeding most any old strain of fighting cocks over extremely inbred hens. The hens are so inbred and so prepotent that they will produce good chickens under any fair cock. But these men have to inbreed the pure strain for "seed." I know of no successful man who uses cross-bred fowl on both sides and I do know that every practical cocker when he finds himself short of fowl for a main, sends off to some old breeder of inbred fowl who has established a reputation for producing cocks that fight alike year after year.

The test of a breeder is his ability to keep good fowl where they are. Any man may fall in the river and come up with a diamond ring, but he is entitled to no great credit for his luck and he can't repeat and a million men who try to follow his example will get drowned before they find a diamond. Real credit should go to the man who knows that he has a gold mine when he finds it and keeps it a paying proposition year after year.

I happen to know that the two strains of cocks that have done the most winning in the northeastern pits in the past two years, the cocks that have won the most and biggest mains have been inbred for more than 20 and 35 years respectively and last winter they looked and fought just like the first specimens I ever saw 20 years ago.

Crossing

IF A MAN lives long enough the time will eventually come, when he will have to cross his inbred fowl. Fowl cannot be raised under such ideal conditions, and no man is so infallible that he can inbreed fowl indefinitely and produce practical pit cocks. Generally speaking most of us expect to introduce fresh blood every fifteen or twenty years.

It amuses me to have men quarrel about the purity of fowl claimed to have been inbred for sixty or seventy years, and then advertise shake cocks for sale of these same strains. I do not believe that nature suspends her laws in favor of a few chosen individuals, and it is amusing or disgusting, as you choose to view it, to see some huckster blossom forth advertising some grand old strain, that has been extinct for a quarter of a century.

Every case of this kind that has ever come under my personal observation I know to be "hocum" pure and simple. I have letters from some of these self-styled perpetuators written when they were scurrying around hunting all sorts of crosses. They would make a much better hit with me, if, instead of advertising Whitehorses, or Warhackles, bred from a trio arriving from John Gulkerson or George Stone in 1858 they would advertise "fowl carrying large proportion of the blood of such and such a strain, and closely resembling them in appearance and pit qualities. They contain only the following additional crosses, etc." Then I would have some confidence in what I was getting and feel that I was dealing with an honest man. If the pure bred fowl did exist, which they don't, they would be fit only for museums and not for the pit.

So when the time does come for crossing, you will have had sufficient experience to know what men breed fowl that you would not be afraid to try. No man can foresee the results of a cross—it is entirely a gamble. I have known two excellent, inbred strains to be crossed and result in chickens that couldn't whip a canary bird. It happens more often than not that a cross is entirely different from what might be expected. All you can do is to make a guess and hope for the best and if it fails try again.

For crossing select a strain that has been pure bred for a number of years, as much like yours in style of fighting and characteristics as possible. Style and characteristics of the proposed cross are much more important than color. Color in itself cuts no figure, but you will probably be more apt to find fowl like you own in the same color. Most of the light reds in this country are descended from and carry more or less of the blood of the old Derbys and allied families and fight more or less alike. As a general proposition the dark reds are rushing, body cutting fighters. The Doms all descend from the Minton and Oneil blood and all that I ever saw were shufflers. The Pyles are descendants of Genet and Newbold blood and are sparring cocks except of course Pyles which are merely crosses of White Dominics.

So other things being equal, you are more likely to find what you

want in strains colored like your own. Get the best individual of the strain obtainable. It is usually more satisfactory to get a cock, because you can select the kind you have seen in battle, that suits you and it is a very rare thing that you can buy a tested hen. Breed the new cock to the very best hens that you own. When old enough test some of the stags for gameness. If they are going to be bad, the sooner you know it the better. If satisfactory so far, breed the new cock to his daughters and one of his sons back over the hens. Then the next winter your original cross will be two years old. Put several of them in a main, also using several of your old stock so that you may compare them.

Unless the cross is approximately as good as your old family, you should go no further with them, as by so doing you will be going down hill.

It is very likely that you may be fooled by the goodness of the first cross. Sometimes a cross between two inbred strains will temporarily niche and produce chickens better than either side of the house, the stream runs higher than the source, as it were, and yet the niche will not "breed on" when put back to either ingredient strain. That is the first cross or half bloods may be the only mistress of the two bloods that is any good. So don't pat yourself on the back until you have fought the cocks of 3-4th your own blood and 1-4 of the new blood.

If they can fight as well as your own chickens you are on the right track. As I have said before, if your hens are intensely game, their sons out of short bred cock may act game, so you will not be sure of the deep gameness of your cross until you have tested out cocks with new blood on their dam's side. So likewise test out some of the sons of the new cock over his daughters. If they stand the test your cross is game at an rate.

After you have bred the new blood down to 1-8, 1-16 or 1-32 you have the advantage of the cross and have chickens just like and as good as your own family, with all the characteristics you have spent in developing your fowl.

If the cross is a real success, put aside a few of the hens carrying 3-4 of the new blood. When they are seven or eight years old you can go back for "new blood" of the same blood and can do away with all the guess work and uncertainties of trying out an entirely new mixture.

When you have made a cross be man enough to admit it. Don't join the band of phoney old dodos who claim that nature makes special dispensation on their behalf and who breed game chickens just as Noah had them in the Ark.

Mating and Breeding; The Selection Of Brood Fowl

THE BEST breeder and the worst are just alike 364 days of the year. Where they differ is on a day in January or early February, when they mate up their brood yards. The selection of brood fowl, the ability to pick your best fowl and mate them for best results is all there is to it.

It is a gift which some can never acquire, regardless of how much they read or how much experience they have. Give John Smith and Bill Jones each a trio of equally good fowl and in five years John will lick Bill four out of five. I know keen business and professional men, who have made marked success in the world who would rather breed a main of cocks able to whip anybody than be elected Governor of their state, and who do their best and fail miserably. I know great cock feeders who can't breed good chickens to save their lives. I know millionaires who spend thousands of dollars buying brood stock and building the finest equipment possible, who can't breed chickens worth a dollar a head. I know race horse breeders who stand at the head of their line, who can't breed good game cocks—and I know boys of little experience and less knowledge who always turn out excellent fowl—so I believe the ability must be born in a man and this article will only attempt to set forth a few things I think I have learned.

I am a great believer in picking your brood cocks out of the pit. Good fighters have only been produced by breeding from winners. There is a certain amount of variation in the fighting ability of any bunch of brothers, even in inbred and uniform families. The difference may be very small, but it is there. Every generation you are either going up hill or down. You can't stand still. It's better to go up hill one per cent, than down hill one per cent. Picking a brood cock on appearance is dangerous. Guessing that you are picking the best fighter of ten brothers on looks, is too uncertain a game to appeal to me.

Some years ago I came into possession of a very old family of inbred chickens. I never saw but one mediocre fighter of this strain and I've seen scores of them. It happened that this one poor fighter was absolutely the strongest and most perfectly built specimen of the strain I ever raised or saw in my twelve years experience with it. He was perfect and I sat and looked at him by the hour. He lost his fight after an hour because he billed when he should have kicked. Had he been an ordinary fighter he could have won and he is the only specimen of this strain I ever saw that had a serious fault. He had a nest brother, not so well built, that was probably the greatest fighter and winner I ever raised and also the greatest sire and producer of winners. His sons, grandsons, and great grandsons, were all remarkable fighters, far above the average strain. A cock has to show me before he is retired to the stud. I want to see him win, win quickly and win all the way. I don't mean that I want to see him win in the first few

flies, that is as likely to be luck as ability, but I want to see him win against a first class cock in the hands of a first class man, in a main for big money, go in and outclass his opponent, knock him down inside of two or three pitings and then finish him in artistic style. A cock that takes a long time to lick an opponent is either out-fought or crippled in the go-off, or else he is a poor cutter. I enjoy seeing my cocks show their ability to come from behind and win, and I appreciate them when they win on gameness, but the kind that I want to perpetuate are the cocks that are good enough to win as they please. It is effectiveness and efficiency in killing that you want in your fowl, so breed to that end, and select a brood cock that has proven himself proficient at murder. Let his brothers prove his ability to come from behind and win long fights if necessary, but breed from the cock good enough to keep in front.

But before selecting your greatest fighter, consider the record of his brothers as winners. It may be that he was the only good cock out of six brothers and that as a lot his clutch is below the average of your strain. So I would not breed from a cock whose brothers had not won a majority of their battles, no matter how great an individual he may be.

Keep records of your battles. They tell the story. Figure up your percentage of wins with each branch of the family and you can tell which line to breed to without any guess work.

I will tell the actual story of one of this country's greatest feeders—who who could feed cocks like a wizard—but who was not blessed with an analytical mind. In the five years I followed him he fought five mains and won three of them. He always used the cocks of two breeders whom we will call A and B. After the last main, a friend and myself were in his cock-house and he told us he was going to breed from a certain one of A's cocks. My friend said, "Which do you prefer, A's or B's cocks?" The old feeder replied "A's cocks are the greatest in the world." My friend said, "I have sat at all your recent mains and kept a record of every cock fought. I counted up last night and with A's cocks you have won one and lost sixteen. With B's cocks you have won twenty-two and lost four." This was literally true and my friend was abused by the old man as an "amateur who didn't know good cocks when he saw them." Of course, cases of such stupidity would be rare—but statistics are a valuable aid in determining who is who and what is what. The question of who are the greatest batters in baseball could be a matter of debate, and the subject of many differing opinions were it not for the fact that the records are kept and the figures settle the question in black and white.

I once made two crosses of a certain strain and sent eight or ten of each kind to a friend to try out for me. After each battle he sent me the markings of each stag and the results of his fight. He finally wrote me, "Destroy both of these crosses, they are no good. I can't win a majority with them." He was much surprised when I showed him his own records which proved that with one of the crosses he had won six out of seven battles and all his losing had been with the other cross. I said "you must be

accustomed to great cocks, if six out of seven winners don't suit you." He was honestly surprised at the figure and said, "Well, I knew I was just about breaking even with the lot, and I just supposed none of them were much good."

Before deciding that a cock is a good fighter and fit to head a brood yard—consider the class of cocks he whipped. They all look good while winning, so it means little to have a winner against some backwoods entry fighting for ten dollars. If your cock won over a bird entered in a big money main by a competent cocker—then you know your kind whipped a fighting cock, not a duck.

Having chosen a cock—now comes the most important part of the brood yard—the hen. Her relationship to the cock and the record of her sire and brothers are the first things to consider. As to relationship, consider how intensely inbred the cock is—and how intensely inbred she is. If the cock is intensely inbred—then the hen should be from a branch of the family not too close to him. If the cock is not very closely bred, then you can breed him to a hen closely related to him. I never saw much good come from breeding full brother and sisters—but any other mating is alright.

Having picked the cock from the pit on performance and not on appearance, he may have slight defects physically. Never breed from a great fighter with serious faults—but do so if his faults are trifling and may be corrected by the hen. If he is a little narrow and shows a trifle too much shank—select for him a hen unusually broad and low set. This is known among breeders as "the rule of compensation" by which the breeder attempts to offset the weakness of one parent by the unusual strength of the other in certain particulars. If the cock is too long in the back, select for him a very cobby hen. You must look to the hen for conformation, power, vigor and vitality. I never knew a soft fleshed, soft feathered, lackadaisical hen to throw good stags, no matter what cock she was bred to.

Besides winning ability in your cock and conformation and winning pedigrees in both cock and hen—you must look for signs of vigor, vitality and constitution. I like these active noisy hens, that are always on the move looking into everything, ranging far and wide, early and late. I like to see a hen whose belly is always full and protruding. Such a hen eats like a horse and has a constitution of a mule. A light eater is lacking in constitution. I also like these nervous, active, talking, cheerful cocks—that are gallant to the hens, fond of human society and get nervous and fidgety in hand, "tight fisted" and always working. I would not breed from a cock that did not handle nicely, and during the feed always come eagerly to the front of his coop, talking and chattering, eat all you would give him and get rid of it quickly. Such actions denote not only sound constitution but heart and courage in a cock. Without exception, the really great sires I have known among game cocks were all "gentlemen," nice handling, talking, cheerful birds.

Manfighters are usually brainless birds. A hen can not have too much nervous energy and I like a hen that will always take her own part

and will protect her young with her life, and when a hen fights I like to see her quick and active, but I have no use for quarrelsome, evil tempered hens. It so happens that I have known in my time two hens that could fight as well and as gamely as a cock. They would kill any hen that wouldn't keep out of reach and would fight hen after hen and would peck as long as they could raise their heads. But both hens were short bred and their sons would run in no time. A hen's desire or ability to fight indicates nothing. The greatest producers of winning excessively game cocks that I have ever known, were even tempered and well behaved.

In the development and improvement of a family of fowl it is most important to single mate, so you will know exactly which hen out of a bunch of full sisters produces the greatest cocks. No two sisters are exactly equal. No breeder alternates a number of brood cocks, even though they be full brothers, over his hens. He wants to know the exact side of every chicken he raises. The hen is two thirds of every mating and it is more important to know the mother of every chicken. It is a nuisance but it is necessary, if you hope to go far and high as a breeder. Any great breeder of race horses or of dairy cows will tell you that great champions are only produced by perpetuating the blood of outstanding individuals and proven producers and one brood mare may be worth fifty thousand dollars while her sister brings only five hundred. Nature has a way of playing practical jokes by producing occasionally, say once in every three or four hundred individuals, a super brood cock or super brood hen that is, a bird so good and so potent that practically every one of their offspring is a sure winner in any company. I have known four or five such birds in the last ten years. They are gold mines to any breeder. Only by single mating can such birds be located. Only by single mating can a breeder take advantage of the high water mark birds of each generation and thus be sure that he is climbing uphill insted of going down.

I have only one more word. The average beginner from some understandable reason always wants to breed from his largest birds. Large birds have absolutely no advantage and many disadvantages. They eat more and are less active and are harder to keep in good condition in captivity. They eat more and are less active and deteriorate more rapidly. Mains are fought by cocks weighing from 4 pounds 6 ounces bottomweight to 6 pounds or 6 pounds 4 ounces topweight. In the north many mains are fought with a 5-12 top weight. Large cocks are hard to match. The easiest cocks to match are those weighing from 4-12 to 5-8 and the prettiest and best fighting is done by cocks weighing from 4-6 to 5-6. I have never known a great brood cock that weighed over 5-8 in the pit and one of the greatest sires I ever owned fought at 4-6. Very seldom does a cock over 5-8 have near the action, speed and quickness of his smaller brothers. A large cock transmits his lubberliness and lack of speed. My choice of a brood cock is one fighting from 4-12 to 5-4. His sons will range from 4-8 to 6 pounds and that is what you want.

Your objet is to breed cocks of main weights, not market poultry, cocks that can be matched and fought, not mountains of flesh.

The best trio of fowl I ever had sent to me came from a real cocker. The cock had fought at 4-12 and the hens weighed 3-10 and 3-12. I have bred scores of their descendent and they have won their backers more money than any chickens I know of, and I never bred from a cock to fight under 4-6 or ovr 6-4. Every cock you get in from his walk, you can rely on being useful in a main.

The first indication that a breeder is getting out of the amateur class is when you see him admiring and breeding from medium sized or small chickens.

Selection

IN READING over my previous article, it seems to me that I have not sufficiently emphasized the importance of intelligent selection of brood stock—and all that it implies. That is all there is to breeding; and few breeders realize what can be accomplished by it. Breeders produce hornless cattle, the standard trotting horse, the game fighting dog, hens that lay 330 instead of 200 eggs a year, raspberries that bear in October instead of June, all by intelligent selection, and in a very few generations. Any animal or plant life is plastic material, which can be moulded practically into the thing desired by the observant and patient breeder.

Give a good breeder mediocre chickens and a poor breeder the best chickens on earth and in ten years the former will lick the latter. We all know cases of strains that are not highly regarded as pit chickens in fast company, but when in the hands of one man are as good as any chickens that grow. I could name several such instances. Good men have taken ordinary blood and by patience and the use of their brains, made it remarkably good in a few years.

This is not a plea for starting with anything but the very best obtainable. Life is too short to waste time with second raters. Nevertheless many a man would do better if he spent his time improving what he already has, rather than in the perpetual search for the best on earth, constantly discarding and getting something new that he believes to be better.

The great breeders have been men who put all their brains and energy into the job of developing the best chickens at their command, into just what they wanted. The style of fighting, culling ability, courage, aggressiveness, vitality and conformation of a strain are all determined by the desires, brains and determination of the man back of it. The ancient history of a strain is less important than is the man who has been breeding it the past ten years.

Two things are absolutely essential to success as a breeder and to enable a breeder to benefit by selection. First: he must have a very clear and definite idea of the kind of chicken that gets the money and of what he is trying to produce and the object he is after. He must carry a picture of the perfected fighting cock in his mind at all times. That is the target he is shooting at and the best marksmen make poor scores when they can't see the target. It is not sufficient, as Dal Johnson suggests, to have a picture of the perfect physical specimen on the barn door. The breeder must have in his mind's eye a moving picture of what he regards as the most perfect fighting cock in action that he ever saw. He must constantly select with that target in view and in mind. Second: he must have a pure bred uniform strain to start with. Every chicken inherits not only from his immediate parents, but from an infinite number of ancestors of more distant degrees. Scientists tell us that on the average an animal's qualities are obtained as follows:

1-2 from the immediate ancestors.

1-4 from the grandparents.

1-8 from the great grandparents.

1-16th from the great great grandparents and so on indefinitely.

To make your intelligent selection and moulding count for anything you must have all your material in hand, you cannot constantly upset your formula by going out for fresh material, which has been bred by another man, with other views in mind and whose chickens inherit tendencies you know nothing of. Chickens of mixed blood inherit from various sources and are subject to many varying tendencies, do not come uniform and do not transmit their qualities with any degree of certainty. Selection from among cross bred chickens means little and accomplishes little—because your cross bred selection will not reproduce himself, but will transmit the varying tendencies of a number of his ancestors.

Cross bred “nicks” are in themselves as good cocks in the pit as pure bred ones, but their value in the brood yard is much less. A “nick” is arrived at by the fortunate balancing of the virtues and defects of two or more strains—which occurs when the blood of those strains is molded in certain definite proportions. Change the percentage of blood of the component strains and nine times out of ten the lucky combination is upset. Suppose, for instance, that a man has a strain of Whitehackles that are excellently bred, persistent leg fighters, accurate cutters and deep game. They are good but a trifle slow, hit too much for the head and have no idea of taking care of themselves. He breeds his hens under a Roundhead cock and gets clever ring generals, but the speed is not increased and the chickens are still head cutters only. He seeks to improve this deficiency and breeds pullets from this mating under a Warhorse cock. He gets just what he is after—fast, rough body cutting cocks, that take good care of themselves and are good steady leg fighters in a long battle. He wins several mains with the produce of this cross and he and his fowl are famous. He names his chickens “Gold Diggers” and he thinks he is getting on top of the world. As long as he can keep the original pens together he is alright. But he can not do that indefinitely. If he breeds back to the hen’s side he gets 1-4 Warhorse, 3-8 Roundhead, 3-8 Whitehackle. If he breeds back to the cock side he gets 3-4 Warhorse, 1-8 Roundhead, 1-8 Whitehackle, both of which combinations are very different from his original lucky blend, both in blood and in characteristics. He has to depend on a balance, like a tight rope walker, not on selection of individuals. The days of any lucky cross are more or less numbered.

The chickens of pure strain inherit from a number of ancestors, but these ancestors were all similar and there is little tendency toward variation. To take advantage of intelligent selection, the brood fowl must be prepotent, that is, they must have the power to transmit their tendencies very strongly to their offspring. Only pure bred fowl can be prepotent.

Few men are so situated that they can inbreed indefinitely without a cross. If a man has a uniform strain they all look alike and all fight alike, and all their characteristics are firmly fixed in them, an occasional cross has no terrors for him. He picks out an excellent specimen of a strain very similar to his own. His own fowl are inbred, uniform and perfect and even the first cross will be very much like his own fowl, providing the

new fowl were similar in type and free from bad faults. Breed this cross back to your own fowl and the 3-4 bloods will look and fight almost like your own pure strain. Put some of these aside to use for "crossing" several years to come. With the chickens bred from them 7-8 your old strain 1-8 the cross, for practical purposes you are back home again and if you have selected wisely, will be no worse for the experience.

All this is aside from the subject of selection, except to show that selection can accomplish little unless you are dealing with pure bred uniform fowl. You can't tell which way heredity in cross bred fowl is going to jump and selection only counts when you are dealing with certainties and heredity can not be controlled in mixed stock.

It is not my purpose in this article to discuss the style of fighting or the conformation a man should seek to develop in his fowl. Books could be written on that subject alone. A man must be a keen observer and excellent judge of fighting cocks, quick to recognize any special merit or fault, a deep student of chicken characteristics and he must have firmly in his mind what he wants and what he is after. His object and goal must be clear before him.

There is a great deal more to selection than the mere breeding of winning cocks over the mother, sister and daughters of winners. That is the small part of it, but nevertheless it is a necessary part. Some advise breeding from unfought brothers to winners, on the ground that a cock's constitution must be somewhat impaired by the experience of going through a feed and being more or less cut in battle. It is, I believe, a great mistake to breed from cocks that have been badly battered or which have gone through long gruelling battles, for two reasons. I have known badly battered cocks after a good rest and several months of walking to throw good sound, vigorous chicks, but frequently they throw weak, deviated chicks and this practice if long continued always leads to the production of unsound fowl of lowered vitality. Secondly, I do not think that the winners of long fights are the kind of cocks to breed from. I want to know that a cock would deport himself well in a long battle, but I am satisfied to learn this from his brothers and other male relatives. If you have a game strain, you will have to take it on faith that your best winners are not dunghills. At least you can't afford to batter your future brood cocks to within an inch of their lives to find out. I am satisfied to let the other fellows get into long battles, but I want to see my cocks win as quickly as possible. There are only two reasons for long fights. Either your cock meets his practical equal as a fighter and is crippled early, or else he is a poor cutter. I want to breed from cocks good enough to outclass worthy opponents and win in short order.

While I would not breed from battered cocks, neither would I go to the other extreme and breed from an unfought cock. No living man can pick his best winners by guesswork, or by any other method than actual demonstration with gaffs in the pit. Every strain, family or bunch of brothers has an average and half under it. Each time you mate a cock you

are either breeding from one over the average and going up hill, or from under the average and going down hill. The only way to tell is to see them all fight, and if you intend to breed a strain of superlative fighters, breed from the most invincible winners. I don't mean to breed from the cock that wins in the first fly, or anything like that, because that is more or less luck and you get no line on a cock's real ability. I would select from among the cocks which had gotten into real battles with worthy opponents, which had lasted long enough to show that the cock fought the style you are after and had no faults and which won without serious difficulty and was good in all departments and at all stages of the fight.

Another reason for breeding from fought cocks, is that you can't really get acquainted with a cock unless you have seen him in the feed, preparing for battle. The cock house is a wonderful place to study your chickens. Some cocks are always cheerful, eager for feed and eager for work. They are sound in nerve and constitution and are not upset by change of conditions, surroundings, feed and travel. Some cocks are sneaky and bashful. They fight alright when the time arrives, but they have tendencies it is not well to perpetuate. Visit the cock house after battle also. The cocks are relaxed, sore and bruised and cut. Rattle the feed cups and watch some stay in the back of the coops while others worse hurt will spring up, dance, chatter and crow and eat eagerly. The last class have vitality, ruggedness and courage, and your brood cock must come from among them. Breed from actual performers but from among those that performed brilliantly and won without being obliged to sacrifice their constitution in the effort.

Breeding from an actual willing cock is the first step in the selection. Next take a piece of paper and figure out the record of your various bunches of full brothers. Be sure that the record of his brothers was above or fully up to the average of your strain. You may have a brilliant four time winner, whose brothers won only three out of ten. You may have another bunch of brothers none as brilliant as the four time winner but among them won nine out of twelve fights, under the same conditions. Freakishness is only transmissible to a very slight extent and I would breed from the best family rather than a brilliant individual of a poor family.

This further limits the field, but every man who fights many cocks has at the end of the season a number of brilliant winning cocks, from families of excellent records, from many which to choose. If he culled closely before he walked his stags, they are all near enough perfect in conformation, proportion and balance to be potential brood cocks. He has studied his cocks in the feed and has eliminated from his consideration those that did not work and eat with eagerness and cheerfulness and those that were depressed and off their feed after battle.

It is foolish to breed from a cock the same season, he has been fed and fought in short heels. He is not in condition to do himself or his strain justice in the stud, until he has been through another moult. Therefore a breeder has a whole season to study his future brood cocks and here is

where close observation and an intimate knowledge of chicken nature are a big help. There is a great deal to observe and think about.

Study the cocks on their walks. A good brood cock is always "fond of the ladies" and is courtous to them. He will not eat until he sees that they are supplied, he will constantly call them to him and is always working and scratching for them. I never knew a good brood cock to strike a hen. A cock that will crowd in and eat ahead of the hens or that will strike at them is not blessed with masculine qualities of body, heart or mind. Courage and vitality are dependent upon sexual vigor and masculinity. A masculine man or chicken has the inherent quality of courtesy for the females. From a considerable experience with both men and chickens I am convinced that the most lowly sexed and the most cowardly are those most inclined to be discourteous to their females. A good brood cock is attractive to the hens and they follow him and flock around him. He must be full of fight at all times.

A cock, however wild, should not hesitate to fight a cock held in hand. A cock that will let his caution make him edge away from a cock held in hand is lacking in that essential quality of aggressiveness, nerve and temper.

Study your cock during the moulting season. If he becomes dull and listless, loses appetite or becomes shy and wild, either his vitality or courage is not the best.

The best brood cock that was ever sent to me came from a great breeder. He was a wonderful pit cock and a wonderful producer. His owner wrote, "I selected this cock for you after watching him go through the moult. He never lost his high spirits and never objected to handling. He was a wonderful, sound, constitution." When he was six or seven years old this cock would fly without effort to a limb twelve feet from the ground. His sons won many a main.

What you are looking for in a brood cock is a superabundance of vitality, energy and masculinity. These things you will always see by observing him on his walk, evinced in a thousand ways. He is always interested, always active and always cheerful.

The same test applies to the brood hens. The best producers of exceptional cocks are always busy. They are the first off the roost in the morning and the last to come in at night. They range the farthest and their crops are always bulging with food. This shows their internal apparatus is active and sound. They are always busy and always curious. The really exceptional brood hens that I have known always had highly developed maternal instincts. They were most watchful and alert in defense of their broods and stayed with their chicks until they were well matured. I never found a great brood hen among those who were indifferent mothers and which left their broods soon.

You will notice some hens will always raise every strong chick that they hatch, while others given equally strong chicks will never succeed in raising many, although they seem attentive. I do not know why they fail but I do

know that I never found one of these unsuccessful mothers to be a good brood hen.

The great brood fowl that I have known were all intelligent above the average of the strain. They seemed more alert, observant and smart. They had individuality and personalities of their own.

I do not like a loggy, tame chicken that can easily be picked up, but I do like a chicken smart enough to know that a man is his best friend. I like a cock that has enough ambition to keep out of the way, but once caught he should handle like a gentleman and not struggle to get away and I like one that holds his head up, talks and chatters and works his feet.

You can only judge a cock's true condition and vitality by observing him on his walk under ordinary conditions. Any cock, except a hacker or a dunghill, will pep up, get on his toes, show off well and appear full of life when brought to a cock house or thrown on a yard with strange hens. The same cock under accustomed conditions may be very sleepy and lazy. Visit your walks frequently as circumstances will permit. Your future brood hens are following him closely, they are the first to get the bug he catches or else they are those who travel the furthest into the woods or along the fence rows. Forget the cock or hens that take long naps under the bushes and those that stay on the roost late in the morning or are early to bed or which hang around the farm buildings hoping to have their food handed to them.

One other thing is to be considered. A cock can have too heavy bone or be too broad shouldered for the ideal pit cock. A medium boned, medium broad back carries less unnecessary weight and is quicker and less cumbersome. However, long continued inbreeding has a tendency to produce light bone and narrow shoulders, hence in the selection of brood fowl, particularly brood hens, it is wise to lean a little to those that are above the average in size of bone and breadth of beam, rather than those that are average or slightly below the average in these respects.

On the average I would say that the hen is sixty per cent or sixty-five per cent of any mating and the cock is thirty-five or forty per cent. A game chicken inherits its courage, conformation and constitution much more from the hen than from the cock. However, there are freaks in both sexes, that are unusually prepotent and which seem to produce chickens after their own pattern, no matter how they are mated. When you find either a cock or a hen that always produces chickens far above the average, care for that bird as you would your first born. Don't foolishly fight a proven brood cock or allow an accident to happen to a proven hen. With great care I have had nine year old brood cocks and ten year old hens produce perfect chickens. These "freaks" appear only once in several hundred chickens, for no apparent cause and represent the high water mark of the strain.

Suppose you have a strain that averages 75 per cent efficient and the individuals of the strain average from 70 to 80 per cent efficient. By

continually breeding to your best you gradually raise the average to 78 or 79 per cent perfect. Once in years you uncover an individual which produces chickens 90 per cent efficient. That chicken is worth its weight in gold to a man who fights cocks for money. By breeding closely to the blood of that individual you can in a short time raise the average of your family more than you could do in years of patient plodding. Nevertheless patient plodding is necessary and single mating is necessary to reveal these freak high water mark hens. I know several families of exceptional chickens that owe their greatness to the fact that they were produced by line breeding to these exceptional producers.

With intelligence, observation, care and infinite patience, practically any result can be obtained in breeding animals and any fault can be greatly reduced by selection. The trotting horse in some fifteen generations has increased its speed 50 per cent, dairy cattle have been bred to produce half again as much milk and butterfat in a like time and breeders of dunghill poultry have doubled the egg production of their flocks within my memory.

You must know what you are after, have the ability to see faults and special virtues, have infinite patience and avoid short cuts and crosses and the world will eventually be your oyster.

I happen to know what one great breeder has accomplished with his strain in ten years. He became possessed with a strain of chickens which he believed could outfight anything he ever saw, but they were an exceptionally nervous wild chicken and a majority of the cocks would hack when brought off their walks to fight. This made them useless. Nothing is more contemptible than a coop hacker and nothing more trying to a cock fighter. To breed and walk stags, then make a main, and have the cocks brought in, and then to have them hack and leave you high and dry, is enough to break the heart of a strong man.

Few of us would have had the courage to bother with such chickens.

Fortunately this breeder believed he had found chickens that fought the way he wanted them to fight and he set about correcting their nervous unsoundness. Every fall after he dubbed his stags he put them all in coops in his barn and kept them there for several weeks. He accustomed them to frequent handling and to hearing other cocks crow all about them. Those that did not soon overcome all shyness he killed at once. Again in moulting season he would bring in his prospective brood cocks and put them in adjoining yards. Those that "cowed under" or which showed an aversion to handling he eliminated. He bred only from those that showed the most heart under unfavorable conditions.

In the past ten years, I have seen scores of this strain of chickens fought and they are the soundest, most unhackable cock I know of. They are walked more than one thousand miles from where they are fed and fought, and I have seen main after main of them in the cock house after a trip of four or five days in an express car and I never saw one of them that was bashful or upset or off its feed. I have seen full mains of them fought, in long gruelling battles, thrown into boxes and carried back over

rough roads by machine through the cold night to the cock house. I have seen coops of them rattled, blinded, some with broken bones, cut to ribbons, sore, weary, distressed and relaxed—and then the feed cups were rattled and every single living cock, struggled to his feet, came to the front of the coops, talking, chattering and crowing and eagerly ate all the feed that was allowed them.

Cocks that can do that are not only deep game but are sound of body, brain and nervous system. They don't just happen. They are the result of very careful selection, carried on for a considerable time.

By selection the northern breeder has developed a type of chicken that fills his peculiar wants. Within the past thirty years farm walks in the north have become unprocurable. Consequently the small northern breeder who breeds and fights his own cocks has need of a chicken that will get its courage very young in coop walks and which can be fought as stags, doing away with the necessity of free range farm walks and carrying of birds over till they are two years old.

By selection, he has obtained what he needs. Hundreds of breeders have chickens which they throw into small pens when they are six months old and which within a few days come to their courage, although they can daily see other stags and the cock under which they were raised.

At nine or ten months they are as game as they ever will be and are almost as well developed as cocks. Selection accomplished this in a few years.

Every man who throws a cock over some hens and raises the progeny is not a breeder. He is a chicken raiser, not a breeder. A breeder is a man who has a clear and intelligent idea of producing an animal or bird for some definite purpose and by selection he accomplishes that end.

Breeding and Raising

THIS is a subject pretty well understood by everybody and I will only write a few things I do that are not generally done and which I have found advantageous. Conditions differ so that each man has to work out his own methods and what I do may not work with other breeders.

I do all my breeding at home and therefore have to breed in pens. I get all the stags off the place in December, put the brood cocks in the brood yards and let the hens run clean. Although I live in a climate where it freezes nearly 100 nights every winter and we expect two or three days of zero weather, about half of my hens roost on trees on the south side of some woods, all year round. The other half roost in open front sheds. The only frozen combs that I ever had were on hens that roosted in a glass front poultry house, which I promptly destroyed. Given fresh air with some of the wind cut off, no reasonable amount of cold will hurt a chicken. A few generations of this life and your fowl become as hardy and rugged as pheasants. During the winter I feed very common food and discourage the hens from laying. I want them to save all their reproductive energy until the breeding season.

Unless I want the birds to fight as stags I am not at all anxious to get started early in breeding. In this climate (southern Pennsylvania) as a usual thing the best chicks are those hatched between April 20th and May 20th. Hens will lay stronger eggs if they can get out on the ground for several days and get some grass and dust in the sun before mating. When mated, I start to feed on the most nourishing food possible, a variety of small grains, soft mash mixed with milk, sour milk to drink and most important, sprouted oats or some grass every day. I set all eggs within a week from the time they are laid, even if I give a hen only three. I never give a hen more than nine and prefer seven. Each chick then gets a larger proportion of the bugs and worms. I keep the hens and chicks shut in a small yard for two nights, and after that let her range at will. She will go to fresh ground and although you may lose some chickens, those you raise will be much stronger than those you raise by keeping the hens cooped for several days.

One very important thing, after a hen has laid her first clutch let her set for a week to rest up, then break her up and let her run on free range for at least five days before putting her back with the cock for a second clutch. Never try to get more than two clutches without letting the hen set, raise a clutch and wean them. A hen is in the best breeding condition of the year after weaning a clutch of chicks. She has had eight or ten weeks from laying and worlds of exercise and range and her eggs will burst with vitality. Further, the only way to keep a hen in first class breeding shape, year after year, is to let her raise a clutch of chicks every season. I have kept hens in vigorous breeding condition up to nine and ten years of age by always following this practice.

A hen is absolutely clean and free from the influence of a previous sire, twenty-one days after the hen has been removed from the cock. I know this as a result of numberless experiments on my part and my conclusions have been verified by the heads of several experiment stations and large poultry plants with whom I have talked. As to a cock carrying the blood or influence of one hen to another, it is rank poppycock and the theory is based on gross ignorance of anatomy and physiology. All so-called results to the contrary are but "throwbacks" of mixed pedigree fowl. For twenty years I have run on my place two strains of fowl of entirely different colors and style. Except in breeding season the hens and pullets run in flocks under cocks and stags of both strains. Never yet have I had a hen when mated to a cock of her own strain fail to produce all her chickens true to color type and style. I never got an off colored chicken or a throwback. Every week, I throw my brood cock out on range with both kinds of hens and a few hours later put them right back over their own hens, and I never got an off colored feather or toe nail. Men who fiddle around with chickens of all kinds, from here, there and everywhere, will doubtless get many surprising looking youngsters, but that comes from mixed blood in their chickens, not from any "previous sire" or "mental and nervous impressions" poppycock. I am told by physicians that with mammals the influence of "previous sire" is theoretically possible, but with birds the system of procreation is so different that it is absolutely impossible. I am also told by horse and dog breeders of great experience that they have never known "the influence of previous sire" to show.

To get back to game chickens. At various points on my farm I have small open sheds in which I keep hoppers constantly filled with grain and a vessel filled with sour milk (thick) where the hens and chicks can go any time they please. I started this system several years ago and would not

When chickens are accustomed to being fed by having grain thrown to them, when they get hungry they will all congregate at the accustomed place, and will chase around after any person they see. The hens will fight and abuse strange chicks and the little stags will try their hands at scraping. They will loaf around till fed, suffering from hunger and wasting time when they should be hunting for bugs. When they do get fed they will gorge heavily and then sit around a long time till the grain is partly digested.

With the hopper system of feeding, as soon as the chicks get hungry they will waste no time sitting around and will never get so hungry that they stuff. Getting food just when they need it and as soon as they need it, they eat only what is required and are back to the fields on the run. Strange to say I have found that chickens so fed require ten per cent less feed and make more satisfactory growth. What they do eat is more thor- ough to raise chickens any other way.

I have one other custom that saves a great deal of trouble, which I find few breeders know about. It means the end of all louse trouble. Every spring I order from a cigar manufacturer a bale of tobacco stems. A bale weighs about 350 pounds and costs about three dollars. I fill every nest with tobacco stems and put tobacco stems on the bottom of the coop when I

take off a hen with chicks. No louse will touch these chickens. I sprinkle tobacco stems on the dropping boards under the roosts in the houses and the lice won't stay on the roosts. This saves all spraying, oiling and white-washing—and best of all it saves greasing the heads of young chicks, a dangerous practice which is responsible for the death of almost as many youngsters as the lice would kill.

If your fowl are kept on free range and the yards kept clean, you will seldom have sick chickens.

On the rare occasions when I have strange chickens sent to my place I quarantine them for two weeks, to be sure that they carry no disease germs and wash their feet and legs with alcohol before turning them with my flock.

I never had a disease break out among my fowl except when I was careless and let a strange chicken run with my own.

I have no experience with diseases and don't care to have, and therefore cannot write of their cures.

A game chicken that has been very seriously or very long sick is of very questionable value in the brood yard or pit and generally speaking it is better to kill and burn them.

Another trick of the trade I learned by experimenting is breaking a hen of the expensive habit of egg eating. Shut your hen in a yard and see that she gets nothing to eat or drink except raw eggs. Keep a pan of two or three eggs in it constantly before her. She will consider it a great treat for a few days, but after about three weeks she will hate to look at an egg. Then put good eggs in a nest box where she sees them daily. I have tried treatment on several hens and found it a permanent cure in every case.

Culling and Preparing for Walks

IF THERE is anything connected with game chickens that is underdone, it is culling. I start when the chicks are a few weeks old, destroying those that show defects, lack vigor or fall behind in growth. Remember that you are out to lick the world with your game chickens and only your best ones can turn the trick. There is no use letting second rate chickens clutter up your place and take up room needed by your best fowl. The fewer chickens on a farm the better they do. My own fowl have absolutely unlimited range, through woods and over fields as far as they care to go in any direction, and I know when I raise only fifty stags I get better individuals than when I raise a hundred. If your space is limited there is much more necessity of keeping as few as possible.

While the chicks are growing, kill off the second raters as fast as they make themselves evident. If you do this you will have a pretty select lot of youngsters by the time they are 5 1-2 or 6 months old. At this time catch the whole bunch and look them over in hand one by one very carefully. First take the stags and kill all those that lack vigor and vitality, all those that are soft of flesh and feather, all that are not very close to perfection in conformation, all those that are too light in bone, or show any defects such as knock kneed or crooked breast bones. Remember you are going to fight these stags for your own hard earned money against the best men in the business, who are sitting up nights figuring some way to beat you. To win in the fastest company you will have to put down perfect fighting machines, with every physical advantage. Suppose you have 100 pretty good looking stags at 6 months of age. Close inspection will show probably fifteen that have decided defects. Out of the remaining 85 you will find 50 or 60 that are very close to perfect and 25 or 30 that are fairly good or "so so." You think they are too nice to eat, they have no decided faults. The "penny-wise-pound-foolish" breeder will keep all 85. The truly wise breeder will walk only the crackerjacks and will eat the thirty "pretty nice" stags. Your extra select stags are so far above the average that they may win 60 to 70 per cent of their battles. The "fairly nice" ones may be good enough to win half their battles. There is no money or glory fighting fifty per cent winners. The overhead expense of breeding, walking, shipping and training cocks is very great and unless you win a very fair majority of your battles you will find chickens a very expensive pastime. The second raters cost just as much to keep and walk and only keep down your percentage of winners. Remember you can't count on your hated rival being charitable enough to save any second raters to fight against you—and if he does, with your crackerjacks you can hold your own against his crackerjacks and lick all his second raters. If you keep your second raters they will only be able to hold their own with his second raters and be easy pickings for his crackerjacks. So don't get soft hearted at culling time. Walk only those stags that you would be proud to show as your own for critical examina-

tion by any man—only those that you know will drop in the pit with a feeling of pride and confidence a year or so hence. Kill the rest. Don't give them away or sell them for some other fellow to lose his money on.

As to pullets, the culling should be even more vigorous. Few men have either the facilities or the need for walking more than 100 cocks a year. To walk 100 you may want to raise 150 stags, and you will then have 150 pullets or 300 youngsters in all. To raise 300 chicks a year you will not use more than 20 brood hens at the most and these 20 will be from one to eight years old. So if you keep the five best pullets out of the 150 every year, you will more than replace those that die from year to year. There is no need for a man to keep anything but absolutely 100 per cent perfect pullets, with such a large field for selection. With females I would not do all the culling at one time. When six months of age you will probably find little choice between 25 or 30 of the best ones and there is no harm in keeping that many. When judging them consider not only bodily perfection, but vigor, vitality and "pep." Then continually study the 25 or 30 from time to time and you will recognize one or two not so good as the rest. They will not have their final form until after the moult in the second year. Then you can do your final culling and you will probably find 6 or 8 left and they should be so perfect that any chicken man will walk ten miles to look at them.

It may be well that one of these hens is worth more as a producer of fighters than all the rest put together. The only way to find out is to mate each hen separately to the same cock and try out their stags. If the stags from one or two hens show up better than those from the others, in the future breed only from those that have proven themselves superior. If they all throw stags about alike in quality and that quality is satisfactory, you can thereafter pen breed all that are full sisters. The only object of single mating full sisters, is to find out the best one, and carry her blood only, discarding all but the very best. If there is no best and all are good, there is no reason for single mating thereafter.

Before walking the stags you will of course have to dub them. For this nothing equals ordinary straight surgical scissors, such as you can get at any physicians supply house. Heavy and curved blade affairs are clumsy and make a first class job impossible. Most stags are ready to trim a week or so before they are six months old. I prefer to trim just as soon as I am sure that the comb and wattlers have their entire growth, and then the stags can be thrown back together, there will be fighting and they will entirely recover from the operation before they are shipped to their walks.

The plan advocated by some of cutting the comb at 8 or 10 weeks I consider very poor. A stag so delicate that he suffers from the operation at 6 months is better off dead and when cut so young the comb grows just enough to look like the devil and furnish an excellent bill hold for some future opponent.

Take your stag, tie his feet together and put him in a bag with a hole in it just big enough for him to get his head and neck through, then

wrap the bag around him to keep his wings held close to the body. Put him on a high table in front of you and go to it. I cut the ears, wattles and comb off as close as I can get them. I take the wattles off first, pulling them out a little in order to leave nothing, then cut the ear lobes close and then the comb. Start at the front and cut back keeping close to the skull. I have heard a lot about the evil of too close trimming, but I have so dubbed about 2000 stags without seeing any bad results. When heeled up my fowl don't show any sign of ever having had a comb or wattles and in the North a big majority of the practical cockers trim absolutely close. I have never heard a practical argument against close trimming. I never knew a stag so trimmed to bear a sign of a cut two weeks later.

A comb is absolutely no protection against the blow of a gaff and a cock needs only the fraction of an inch comb to furnish him good bill hold with which to steady himself for a blow. I have seen many a down cock, reach up, grab an ear or a little comb, pull himself to his feet and deliver a killing blow. On the other hand I have seen scores of cocks bill on the heads of very close trimmed cocks, fail to find anything to hold on to, or have the hold slip and throw them off balance, so that their blows went wild. A cock pitted with any appreciable amount of comb always is laughed at up here and gives the impression of being the product of amateur enterprise. Such a cock may have to give away weight because of the half ounce his comb weighs and I have seen a gaff catch in a comb and dash the cock's head to the ground and badly twist his neck and that blow would have entirely missed a well dubbed cock.

In the South at one time a majority of the cocks carried sizeable combs and their combs, wattles and ear lobes gave the impression of having been chewed off by some baby cutting its teeth, but of recent years, I notice most of the up-to-date cockers make a decent close job of it.

Walking Stags

THIS is a subject on which very little advice can be given. Each man has to do the best he can according to his local conditions. The northern cocker who uses many birds has to do one of two things—either pen walk them or pay some man well to walk cocks for him in the South. Farm walks in the North grow scarcer every year and few men can find first class farm walks for more than a dozen or twenty stags.

There is little to choose between pen walks and Southern walks. The former is more expensive. The yards themselves cost a great deal to build and maintain and you must employ a very honest, conscientious and careful man to look after your birds—a man that knows a great deal about chickens, unless you are fixed so that you can and want to spend your entire time at home playing nursemaid and valet to your birds.

If the yards are of good size and the caretaker is very competent you will have birds that will be very hard to lick, hard to tell in the pit from good farm walked cocks. A good yard walk is better than a second rate farm walk and the great advantage of coop walks is that you will save practically every stag, they are there when you want them, and there is no danger of “varmints,” theft, mutilation or the cutting of wings. We owe a great deal to the pen walker of the North. He has developed a type of chicken that gets its courage young and under adverse conditions and that stands confinement well. He and his chickens are both worthy of the greatest respect. Any one who is hunting for cinches, wants to stay away from the pen walked cocks of New York, New England and New Jersey. The pen walker has demonstrated that there are plenty of strains of fowl that need no free range to get the deepest courage. The yard should be at least twelve by eight feet under roof and twelve by eight feet under wire and the larger it is the better. The house part should be “open front” so that the stag does not become a hot house plant. The place must be kept scrupulously clean and the household contain a deep litter of clean straw into which grain is thrown. The stag should have to work hard for every grain he gets. He must have before him all the time clean, fresh water, ground oyster shell and charcoal. He should have a hen or two with him, and swings swung from wire in both the inside and outside sections. He will get a lot of exercise flying to his swing and balancing himself on it. The front of the yard instead of being constructed of boards, should be made of two wire nettings at least a foot apart, so that the stag can see what is going on in the outside world, but yet not fight through with any cock on the outside. It is a good idea to move the stags from pen to pen every few weeks to keep them from getting too weary of their surroundings. This is an expensive but satisfactory way of walking stags provided a good man is in charge.

I do not pen walk my stags for three reasons. First: the difficulty of finding a man competent to take care of the birds, is very great. Most men who want such a job are either incompetent, unreliable, lazy or dis-

honest. Secondly: I care only for cock fighting at its very best. I want to fight only against the best men and the best cocks and after all the time I spend in breeding, I want my cocks to have every advantage I can give them, and I believe the best farm walked cocks will on the average be able to lick the best pen walked cocks, other things being equal. Thirdly: I cannot bring myself to regard game chickens as mere gambling device. If I ask a cock to fight for his life and my money, I feel under obligations to let him enjoy life in the natural way up to the time I put him in the feeding coop. This is perhaps foolish and sentimental—but I consider a game cock as more than a roulette wheel or a pair of dice kept merely for the convenience and pleasure of the gambler. I would not care to own an animal that I could not allow to enjoy life.

So I am forced to farm walk cocks in the South. The finding of an honest man, competent, willing and able to walk from 20 to 50 stags a year is considerably more difficult than finding a needle in a haystack. A dishonest man has you at his mercy. I pay men four and five dollars a year to place a stag for me with tenant farmers. I lose outright from 30 to 40 per cent. At least ten per cent come up with wings cut and tails pulled out, some come too thin and a few too fat. The long trip North and the change of climate knocks a lot off their feet. If you expect to make a main to show 15 cocks, you must walk 35 stags. Of course the Southern man is near his walks and can keep an eye on them and is spared all the trouble that makes a Northern man's hair turn gray. However, I guess that the attempt to farm walk pays. Out of the 35 walked you are likely to get back 15 cocks so well developed and vigorous that they will kick the slats out of most pen walked cocks.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to farm walk your own cocks the following are the things to look for. A farm with only a small flock of hens. Buy all the farmer's roosters, turkeys, geese, ducks and guineas, if he has them. The place should have running water, a shed where your stag can roost in bad weather and a protected covered yard where he can scratch and exercise in snowy weather. Try to impress both the man and his wife with the bird and impress them with the fact that the bird will be useless to you unless he is returned in perfect condition, and that he must not be confined at all or have a single feather cut or removed.

Pay well. Ten dollars a year is not too much to pay for a perfect walk in your own neighborhood. Drop around every few weeks to see him and talk with the farmer and his wife. Do not give the impression that you are suspicious(but that you are so interested in this particular bird's development that you want to see him often. If the stag is doing well praise him and his caretaker loud and long. A little appreciation goes a long way.

Be As Game As You Want a Cock To Be

I AM going to close this series of articles with what is largely a repetition of what I have said before. The one greatest piece of advice I can give any breeder is—after you have started with a strain of chickens that prove themselves game and that are possessed of no bad faults and are reasonably good fighters—stick to them and improve them and don't go off half cocked after every strain of so-called world beaters that lobs up. Be as game as you expect your chickens to be. Stay with them and improve them, don't drop them and take up something else. A man who is perpetually crossing and changing strains is like a fighting cock, which when he is getting the worst of it, decides to give up the battle and try something easier another day. Neither that cock nor the man that follows his example will get far or last long.

The best description of the tendency of the average breeder was given by the man I consider this country's most gifted and successful breeder. For twenty-five years he has been breeding and fighting one strain of chickens. They look just like they did when I saw them fifteen years ago, and they fight better. In all their history, fighting one or two mains a year, against the best men and best cocks in the country, a majority has yet to be defeated in a main. I recently saw five of this breeder's cocks, as much alike as peas in a pod, all win their battles in a main for \$2000.00 a side.

This breeder said: "Most men who breed cocks are like a hound puppy. They hit a trail and go off at top speed—giving tongue. Another rabbit jumps up to the right and the pup abandons the trail and chases the second rabbit. Before long a fresh trail crosses the path and off goes the pup bellowing after the third rabbit. Before long the pup is exhausted, his tongue is hanging on the ground and he is no nearer a rabbit than when he started out." The advice contained in this parable is worth a thousand dollars to any man capable of getting the point. We all know a lot of puppies who after several years are farther than ever from the rabbit.

I know a man who about six years ago made considerable money. He had by accident come into possession of 15 or 20 stags of an old established strain. Rushing in where angels feared to tread, he made two mains against first class cock fighters his first season, and his inbred cocks pulled him through and he won them both. The world was his oyster. His self confidence and conceit knew no bounds. He spent about twenty-five thousand dollars on a farm, putting in the very best equipment. He read the magazines and whenever he heard of a main at some distant point being won by some world beating starin, he sent off for several cocks and hens, paying for the very best. He must have spent ten thousand dollars buying brood stock and walked cocks. He employed one

of the best feeders in the country by the year and paid outrageous prices for the best walks. His feeding coops since the first year have contained the proud boasts of Canada, Mississippi, Oregon, Washington and Oklahoma. He has not won a main since the first year he pitted more runaways than game cocks and is at present dead broke. However, wisdom has come with adversity—and he has a handful of his original fowl—and you couldn't get a hen of that family from him if you offered to trade him all the world beaters in the United States and throw in the Mississippi River and the United States Mint.

Pick up any game journal of five or more years ago. Look at the new made strains of that period that were then hailed as the coming champions—cocks that were going to revolutionize the art of cockfighting. Where are they now? Gone and forgotten. Look over the files for twenty years back and you will see how history repeats. The men now at the top, who were at or near the top ten years ago, are men who have stuck to one family. I can speak of personal knowledge of my own section of the country and I say without reservation that there is not one strain of cocks in the dozen most formidable in the pit, that isn't a uniform pure strain, that was with us ten or fifteen years ago. No new strain has gotten near the top in short heels, at least, in the past 15 years.

Things seem to be the same in the South. The most impressive showing in recent tournaments have been made by strains of cocks older than most of the men who see them fight.

It seems that some men can't help dabbling with new chickens any more than others can help dabbling in wild cat oil stocks. I know an awfully nice young fellow, an intelligent business man and a very likeable and honest person who has the friendship of many experienced breeders who have tried to help him out. About every three months I get a letter, about as follows: "I saw a main between A and B, B won 7 to 4. He has the best cocks in the country. After the main I bought the best cock he showed and had him send me six hens." The next letter will be about the main in which C licked B, and he says: "C has the measure of them all these days. I have purchased two trios from him." According to this fellow, the championship of the South has changed hands about ten times in the past three years, to a new man each time. Already most of this boy's champions have slipped into the discard.

It is very doubtful if any man ever lost as many mains as did Mike Kearney but he stuck to one family of chickens and won more than he lost and although I personally did not greatly admire his strain, he was never a bait for a cinch hunter and his last main was against a strain of world beaters and old Mike won 6 or 7 to 1. If the Eslins, or Morgans, or Charlie Brown had become disgusted with their chickens every time they got licked this country would have lost three of its most valuable strains.

Having a strain that suits you, when you are licked, instead of trying to get the fowl that licked you, or breeding something new that you have had no experience with, stick to what you have and by intelligent

selection of brood fowl, improve them. Give a man a strain of game chickens that are just ordinary fighters, if he will stick to them and intelligently mate them, I will guarantee that in fifteen years he will be better off financially and have much better chickens than if he kept procuring one strain after another, as it came into the limelight.

I don't mean to urge any man to be satisfied with second rate chickens but having once procured the strain you want and finding it what you expected, stick to it and don't be forever looking with longing eyes at the latest flash in the pan winners. Given game fowl or ordinary fighting ability, by proper selection a good breeder can in a few years mould them to fight the way he wants them to and can improve the winning ability of his fowl to a remarkable degree. A man who so breeds will have much more lasting success than the chap who happens to strike a fortunate niche by crossing. I have known fellows to blow them up 'at last strike a winning niche. At once they pose as great breeders, the lucky cross is given a name and much printer's ink is expended in glorification of the breeder and his poultry. Needless to say, the fall from glory is as sudden as was the rise, because such men have not the necessary knowledge to enable them to perpetuate the good they stumble on to.

Any man who uses his brains in breeding, any man with experience who is a student of breeding game chickens, knows that to perfect and perpetuate one family of chickens will require all the brains, experience and facilities at his command and the more strains he breeds, the chances of making a decided success of any one, grows less with each added. I know of but two breeders whose names and strains have survived their times who tried to breed more than one strain and they had but two. Grist has his Champions and Gradys and Eslins had their Redhorses and Red-quills. I know of no man who has succeeded with more than two strains.

I know a young chap who has eight distinct strains on his yards. I gently suggested to him that he should decide which was the best of the eight and devote all his time and attention to it and not waste energy on the other seven. I received a very haughty reply to the effect that a gifted breeder such as he was owed it to humanity to breed as many kinds as possible, to make the benefit of his genius more wisely felt and that all eight of his strains were so perfect that he felt it no tax on his mighty intellect to breed them all, in fact he had them so perfect he found it unnecessary to study or think about them any more and that it was only necessary to study and think about breeding when you had inferior chickens, not perfected ones as his were. This boy had never fought a main in his life and had never seen fifty of his own birds in the pit.

On the other hand, I was recently talking to a breeder of over forty years experience, a man whose fowl have a record unequalled by any I know of, a man who has fought his cocks for years against anybody who would meet him. He had just won a big main against a first class opponent winning every fight. I congratulated him upon the victory and his fowl and said they were as near perfection as chickens could be, and spoke of his

thirty years work perfecting one strain. He said: "They are far from perfect. I am just starting. I am just learning enough about them to breed them correctly." He spoke very seriously and meant every word he said.

Col. Morgan, the best of the last generation, when over eighty years of age, wrote, "It is a very dumb man who can't learn some new or important fact about game chickens every season. When a man realizes how little he knows—it is a sign that he has learned considerable. The only man for whom there is no hope is the man who knows it all. The young fellow of five years experience is much more confident of his knowledge than the man of twenty-five years experience."

If I knew half as much now as I thought I knew fifteen years ago—this series of articles would have been worth reading.

TAN BARK.

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L.A.

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